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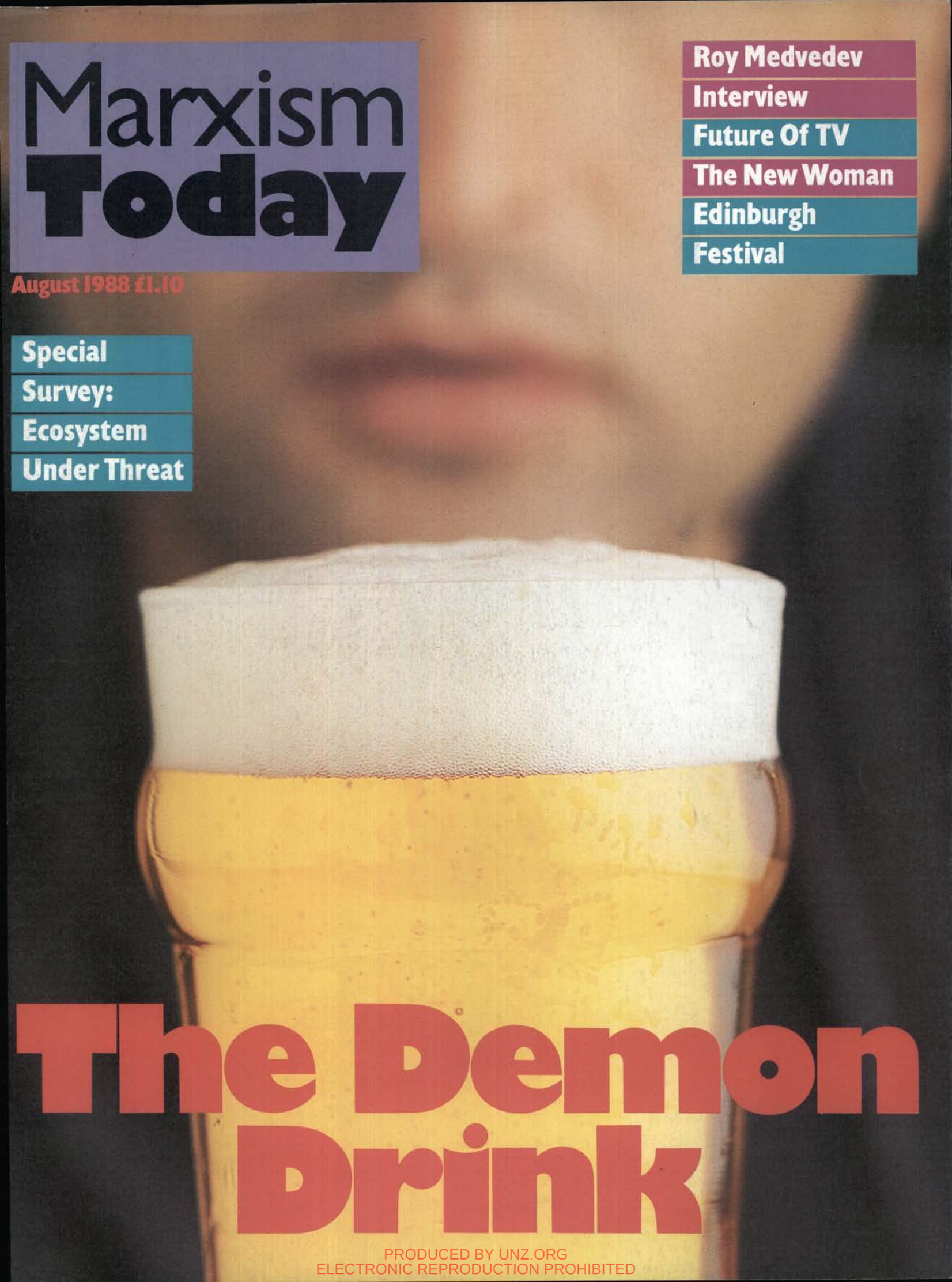

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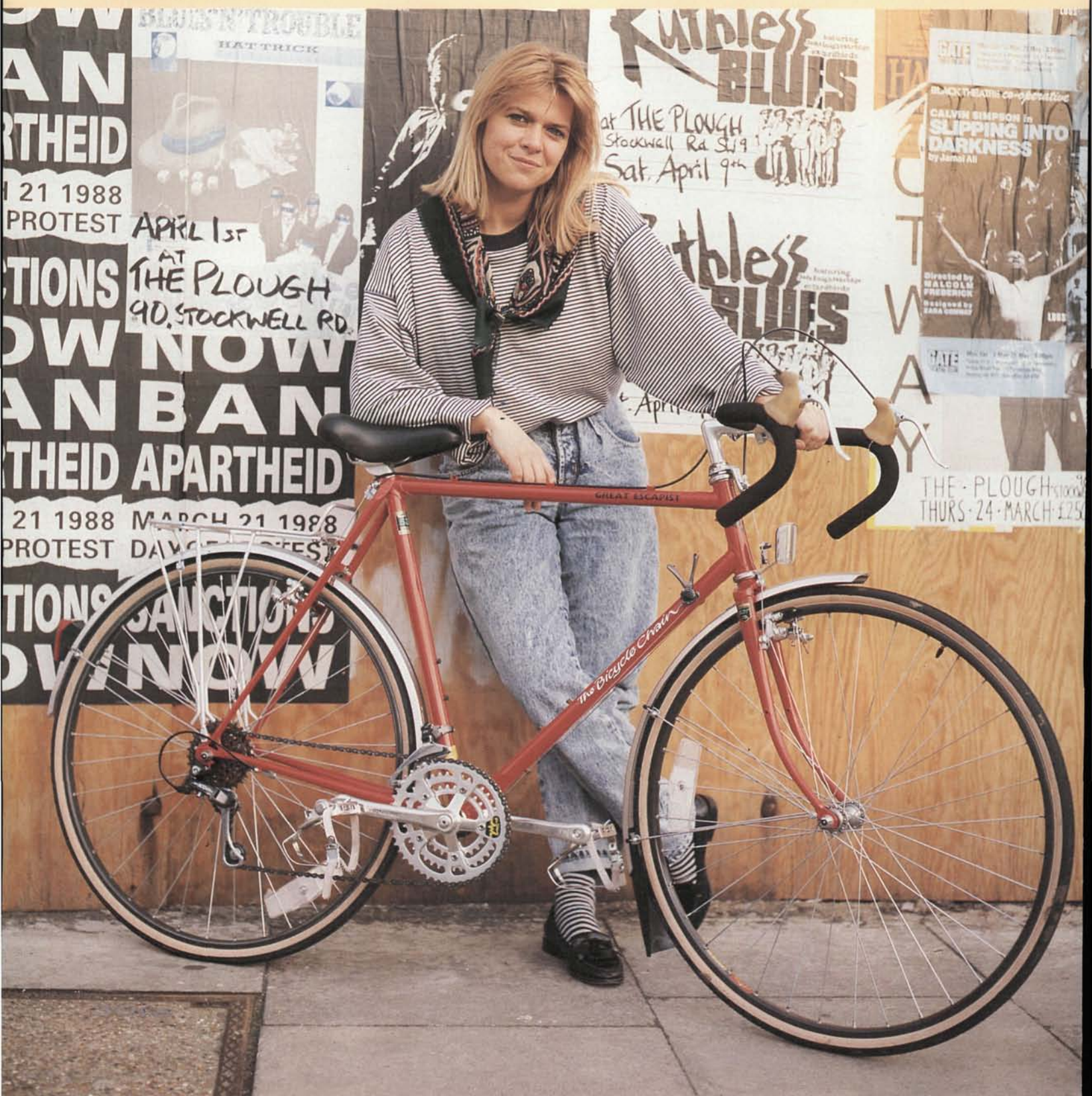

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Illustration: Beverley Levy

Paradise Postponed

Perhaps the only point to be made with any certainty about the current chaos across the airways of Europe is that things will get worse before they get better. Europe's airways, like the M25 motorway around London, are creaking under the increasing strain of handling too much traffic and measures currently in hand to tackle the crisis are not expected to have any significant impact until the early 1990s.

The number of flights passing through the European flight-control centres is expected to grow by a sixth between 1987 and 1990 and forecasts by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) project that the number of aircraft travelling around Europe will have doubled by the year 2002.

This huge anticipated increase in volume comes at a time when passengers are spending days bottled-up at airports, largely for holiday charter flights to the sun-spots of southern Europe.

However there is no easy solution to the growing crisis which threatens to bring similar scenes of chaos at the airports for several more years. European airspace is a complex network and, unlike the United States, where a single system applies throughout the country, Europe is not co-ordinated. Essentially, it operates through a series of national air traffic-control systems that are loosely tied together.

This loose network operates reasonably well in terms of handling scheduled flights between the major capital cities of Europe. But it reaches breaking point during the peak summer months when much of northern Europe is in transit to the southern sunspots. In Britain, for example, there has been a 60% rise in the number of individual flights to certain destinations in the Mediterranean over the past three years alone. So far, all this increase has been in the number of charter flights.

But there are considerable fears within Europe that the airways will face further strain from *scheduled* flights in the coming years because of growing demands for liberalisation of the airline industry. Liberalisation will exacerbate the congestion problem because a relaxation of the licensing regimes will make it easier for new airlines to start up in competition with established carriers. New airlines mean yet more aircraft battling for the same crowded sky-way, and will reverse the trend of several decades which has seen average numbers of passengers per plane growing steadily.

On top of this congestion has come the traditional round of industrial disputes in key countries like France, Spain and Greece where the volumes of airline traffic are at their peaks during the summer. The airways are particularly vulnerable to French air traffic controllers because so many flights cross French borders en route to the sun.

Air traffic controllers obviously use the busy summer months to make their voices heard to the best possible effect, but there is a pattern of discontent among controllers which crosses national boundaries. Controllers throughout Europe feel

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they are underpaid in relation to their enormous responsibilities, and the mounting crisis of congestion is reinforcing their point. There is also a belief among controllers that the authorities do not invest enough to keep pace with the growing demand for airline flights.

In Britain, for example, it is widely accepted that we have invested too little in the past and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is now anxious to make the point that around £200m is being sunk into the operation over the next few years. However the full effects of that spending on air traffic control management will not be felt until 1995 at the earliest and controllers argue that it is too little, too late.

'Things reach breaking point during the peak summer months when much of northern Europe is in transit to the southern holiday sunspots'

At the same time, the CAA, under direction from the government, has been trying to reduce overheads and alter working practices through the introduction of flexible rostering, so that the staffing of control stations can be more closely matched to variations in traffic flow. The controllers have objected and their morale has never been lower.

On a more global scale, there is a growing belief that all the European nations must come together to draw up a co-ordinated air traffic control system, with compatible equipment and improved rewards for the unsung efforts of air traffic controllers.

However, differences in governments' policies, not least towards the controllers, will probably make it more difficult than is necessary to implement a more efficient European air traffic control system. In the meantime, the ordinary sun-seeker faces several more years of sleeping rough on airport floors. ●

Michael Smith

Women's Labour Pains

Women's increased ability to control their fertility looks like helping to give a belated boost to female pay packets over the next few years. As the 60s' baby bulge flattens out in the run-up to its sharpest dip in 1995, British companies will no longer be able to bank on a supply of cheap youth labour.

The government, with its dire track record on equality at work, is furrowing its brow. Ministers now warn the economy will be hit unless firms frame new recruitment strategies to cope with the teenage shortfall. For once, market forces are poised to bolster women's position in the job market.

There is a long way to go until the new dawn for women. Thirteen years on from the equal pay legislation, average hourly earnings of women working full-time are a shaming 73.6% of male earnings. Women lose out disproportionately in bonus and overtime pay. Childcare at work is seen as a rare luxury for selected professionals. Many women remain ghettoed-off in low-paid, low status jobs. The rights of part-time workers face further attack.

But a newish, optimistic critique is taking root, and its key tenet contains a pleasing dash of retributive justice. Firms that continue to treat women workers shoddily could be in for their commerical come-uppance. Smart bosses in highly-competitive sectors such as finance are already beginning to offer women a fairer deal at work. As the supply of school leavers dries up, women will have their potential to flex bargaining muscles enhanced. They will demand – and have a good chance of securing – better pay, promotion prospects, flexible career patterns and workplace nurseries, even. Or that's the hope.

There *are* optimistic signs, but relatively few employers have yet tumbled to this form of enlightened self-interest. The report which set government alarm bells ringing makes grim reading: only one in seven firms had any grasp of the looming shifts in demography. Few had made plans to attract back into the labour force women who have had children to help bridge the school leaver gap. The number of those aged between 16 and 24 will have dropped by 1.2m by 1995.

If women workers have been traditionally dumped-on by employers, then the labour movement must plead guilty to collectively consigning 'women's issues' to the sidelines. At last, through a happy confluence of crusading zeal and the survival instinct, things have begun to change.

Ideological correctness apart, simple arithmetic dictates that unions must attract more women members. Women now make up more than a third of the membership of the TUC unions. The big general, service and retail unions in particular, have refashioned recruitment strategies. Issues affecting women in the workplace – from cancer-screening to shift premium payments – are getting a higher priority on bargaining agendas.

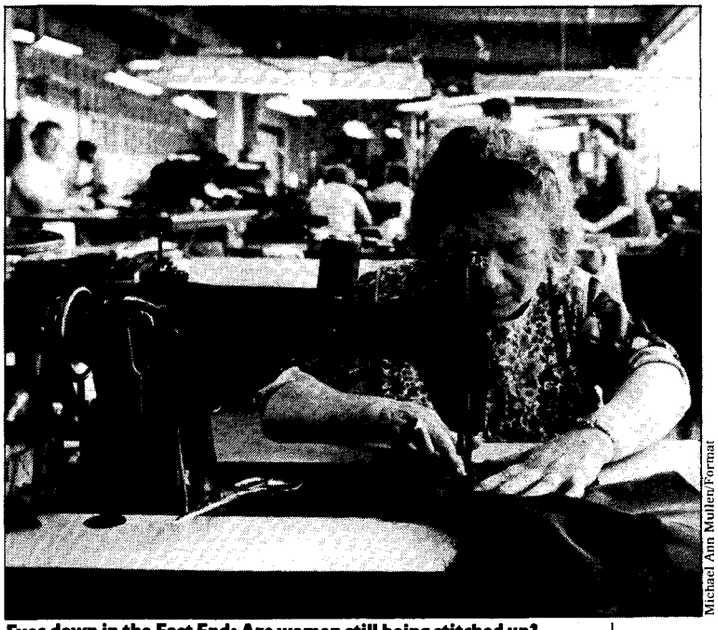
It is a tough slog translating rostrum rhetoric into the reality of recruiting on the shop floor and unions still have to shake off their predominantly macho image. Women remain glaringly under-represented in union hierarchies, from the general council to the branch committee. The recruits the movement needs to survive will not be fooled by skin-deep PR.

The prominent news and tv publicity surrounding union-backed 'equal value' test cases arguably gave unions' image among non-union women workers their biggest boost of recent years. Unions must now use these rulings to eradicate discriminatory pay structures by negotiation.

Centrally, the TUC's new equal rights department, fully up and running by September's Congress, needs to be given sufficent cash and clout to help unions make fresh recruitment inroads and deliver a better service to existing members.

The potential for getting a better deal for women workers has never been greater. Unions have a responsibility to harness these forces. If they botch it this time, they won't deserve another chance. ●

Helen Hague



Michael Ann Mullen/Format

Eyes down in the East End: Are women still being stitched up?

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Second Rate Service

My local tennis courts have an excellent hard surface with an even bounce which attracts some pretty *nifty* players. As the courts are in the heart of health-conscious north London, the demand for them at weekends is almost infinite. And yet, one of the six courts has had a broken net for over a year, there is no booking system, the guy who issues the tickets has no proper method of allocating the courts and, as often as not, pockets your £2 without giving a receipt.

It is the kind of failing in the provision of municipal sports facilities which has allowed in the privatisers. The government has recently added the management of sports facilities and leisure centres to the list of council services which must be put out to competitive tender.

The precise details about what conditions councils will be able to impose on private firms taking over the management are as yet unclear. It seems that councils will still be allowed to subsidise facilities for the poor but the definition of such groups may be tightly restricted. The fact that all the sports bodies are opposed to the move – even the government-appointed board of the Sports Council has been lukewarm – shows that there are real fears that many sportsmen and women will be priced out of facilities after privitisation.

As the example of my local tennis courts shows, however, the councils are not wholly innocent victims. Of course sports facilities have suffered over the past decade from the general squeeze on council budgets but blame for the condition of many of these amenities cannot rest solely on the lack of money.

The root of the problem is the failure of local authorities to look at their services from the point of view of the consumer. The emphasis has been on cheap and poor services rather than on providing good facilities. The exception has been the prestigious leisure centres into which millions of pounds have been poured to ensure that particular councillors will be remembered for their monumental achievements. Often, that money would have been much better spent in the more mundane task of upgrading existing amenities or ensuring that they were better-managed.

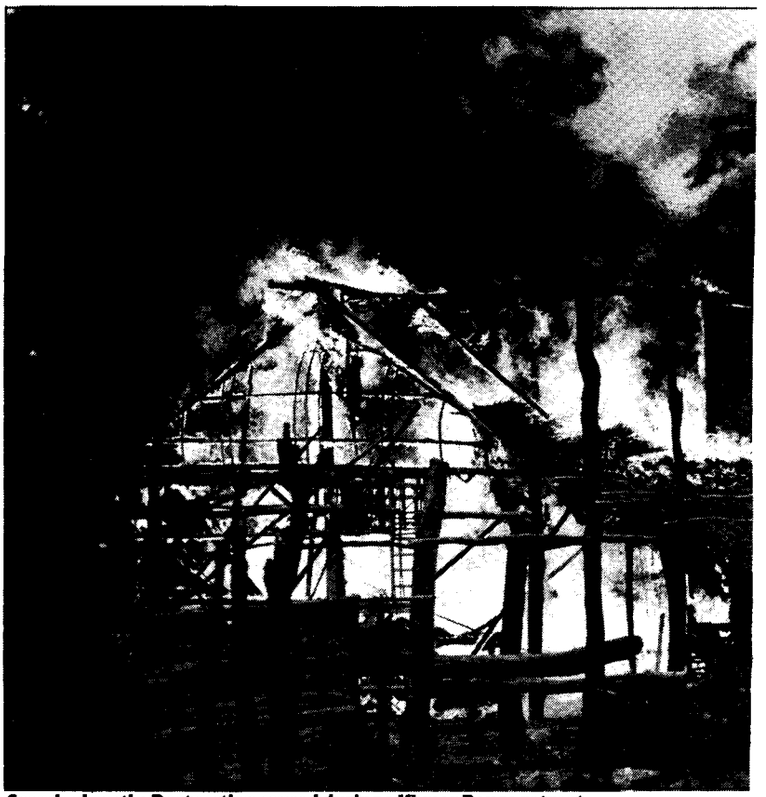
Recreation also suffers the effects of being a backwater of council service provision because there is no legal duty to provide anything at all. Housing and social services attract council high-fliers and these statutory services are bound to be better protected at a time of cuts.

Although Labour councils, quite rightly, have not simply based their provision on the needs of the marketplace, they have, quite wrongly, ignored the needs of local people. They have not learnt that some sports users can afford to pay quite high prices which can be used to subsidise others. Nor have they noticed that poor people are as likely to shun poor facilities as the rich, however cheap they are. They have not done the simple economics to work out that by leaving a net collapsed, the council loses far more revenue than it would take to repair it.

It is one of the humbling truths for local councils, particularly those in Labour control, that the advent of privatisation offers them a way of improving these facilities. Inadequate management structures supporting staff who are often simply not up to the task of providing a good service will have to be improved if the private firms are to be fought off. The revenue from my local courts will have to find its way back to the council rather than the attendant's pocket.

Of course, the net on the Court Six will probably be repaired, but the price of that may well be that the courts will remain shut at all times except peak hours. ●

Christian Wolmar



Scorched earth: Destruction caused during a Khmer Rouge retreat

Back To Zero

For some time it has seemed likely that the Vietnamese will, if necessary, follow the example of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and pull their forces out of Kampuchea without an agreement, rather than maintain their presence there. For Vietnam, given that country's critical economic situation, the Kampuchean commitment has been costly, both in keeping up an army of over 150,000 and in terms of the excuse this has provided for Western nations, as well as the pro-Western bloc of Pacific countries (ASEAN), to treat Vietnam as a pariah.

Now, the announcement by Vietnam that it would withdraw 50,000 more troops, leaving only 40,000 to be put under Kampuchean government control until their final withdrawal in 1990, has increased the flurry of diplomatic activity.

From 1975-79 Kampuchea was under the control of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge, in a regime based ultimately on terror and mass killings, which tried to build a perfect communist agricultural society.

Since January 1979, when the Vietnamese together with Kampuchean exiles, invaded and overthrew the Pol Pot regime, both external interference and internal isolation in Kampuchea's affairs have occurred simultaneously. The general non-recognition of the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) has meant that, apart from aid from Vietnam, the socialist world and Western non-governmental organisations, the government and people have had to rebuild the country in virtual isolation.

At the same time there has been intense external interference to destabilise the regime and encourage a permanent state of guerrilla war launched from refugee camps on Kampuchea's borders. Today the most concerned outside powers, especially the ASEAN countries and Australia, are facing up to the possibility that their bluff in supporting the Pol

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Frank Spooner Pictures

Pot clique will now be called.

The Khmer Rouge force would have collapsed in 1979 if it had not been supported by China and Thailand. For them, and for the USA and Britain, the crimes of Pol Pot were less important than the fact that his was the one group which could be counted upon to continue fighting and accept no settlement or compromise with the Vietnamese.

The constant drain of the war on the resources of Kampuchea and Vietnam was useful in weakening these countries and holding back their development; for the US there was an added importance in punishing Vietnam for its 1975 victory over the US and ensuring that, in south-east Asia, as in southern Africa and Central America, socialism should always be synonymous with poverty.

Supporters of the former Kampuchean ruler Prince Sihanouk (overthrown by a US-supported coup in 1970) together with Son Sann's anti-communist Kampuchean People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF), in 1982 joined with the Khmer Rouge to form the 'Coalition Government of National Kampuchea' (CGNK). This was also a bluff, window-dressing to give the reality of Pol Pot respectability.

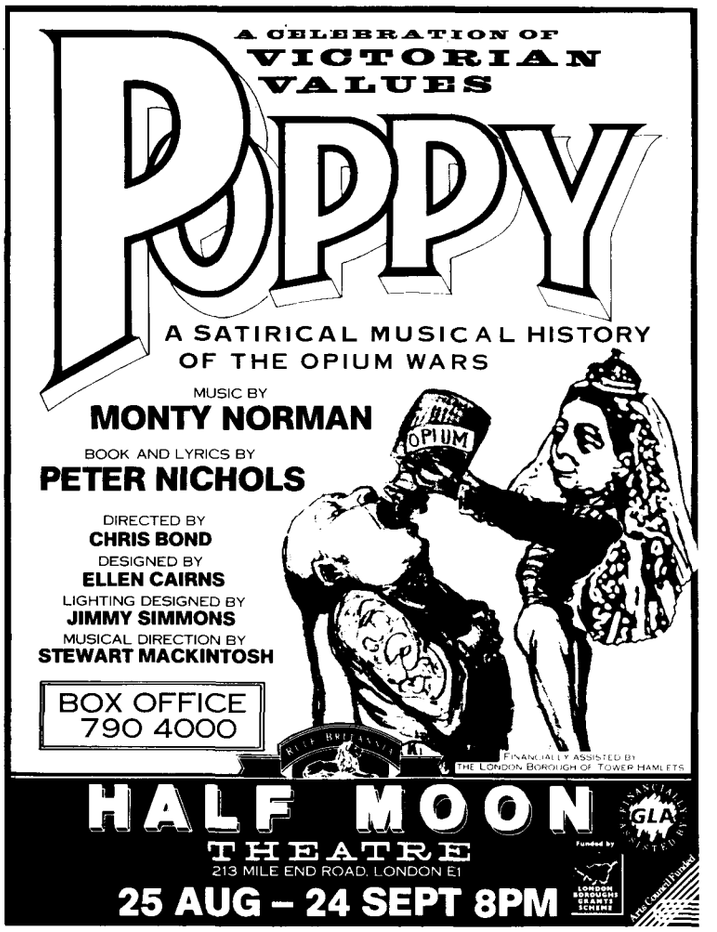
The imminence of the Vietnamese withdrawal has called that bluff. In the last year, the Khmer Rouge have been keeping a lower profile, decreasing their operations and moving 'sleepers' into the rural areas hoping to seize power after the Vietnamese go. Few doubt their actual intentions: to use the departure of the Vietnamese to eliminate not only the Heng Samrin government but also their own 'allies', the Sihanoukists and the KPNLF.

Within Kampuchea, people are terrified of a new Khmer Rouge takeover. The non-governmental aid agencies which work in the country reflect that fear to the British government, which ignores them. However, within other circles they are gaining support; 170 Tory MPs signed an Oxfam-supported early day motion on Kampuchea.

Talks have been held in Paris on and off since December between the PRK and Sihanouk's representatives but they have failed to come to a conclusion. If no agreement is reached before the Vietnamese go there are various possibilities: the PRK government might be strong enough to hold down the Khmer Rouge; the Khmer Rouge might take over the country, (and the Vietnamese have said they will not return, 'whatever happens'); the country might be divided between Khmer Rouge in the west and PRK in the east.

A lover of theatrical gestures, Sihanouk has used resignation constantly as a means of putting pressure on other groups to recognise his indispensability and come round to his point of view. His withdrawal from politics on July 10 was, like his earlier resignation in January and rescinded a month later, a means of putting pressure on China to cease its support for the Khmer Rouge. As he said on July 12: 'The Khmer Rouge must be prevented from taking back power. Otherwise we risk seeing Polpotism in all its horror'. ●

Liz Hodgkin



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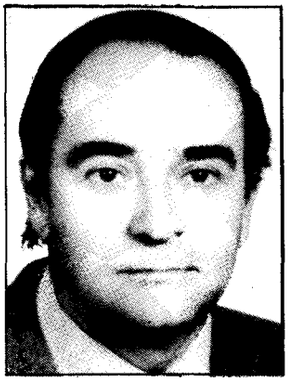


Spain's Retiring Types

There's more to the Costa del Sol than package tours and pints. But this other kind of tourism brings its own problems, writes Francisco Jurdao Arrones of his home town, Mijas.

To most people tourism in Spain is a very simple affair – it involves a tourist and a hotel in a sunny place. Tourism as a mass social phenomenon came into being on the Spanish Mediterranean coasts at the end of the 50s and during the 60s.

At last the working class saw their right to holiday pay fulfilled and they could now afford a trip abroad. In the rich industrialised countries of Europe this was seen as a reward for their effort. So they packed their bags and kids and set off in search of sun and peace somewhere on the coast of Spain: at the time under Franco's dictatorship.

The Costa del Sol, in the province of Malaga, became the centre-stage of Spanish Mediterranean tourism, thanks to its wonderful weather. Cities such as Torremolinos and Marbella at first, and later Benalmadena, Fuengirola and Mijas evoked sun, sea and sand: in a word, holidays. Yet within these tourist cities which sprang up from nowhere, hidden behind their hotels and white painted houses with potted plants, lies an extraordinary example of property speculation.

A hotel is built in a desolate area. Land adjacent to it, previously at two pesetas per square metre soon sees its value shoot up to 1000 ptas. All this means that scores of peasants sell their land to become wage earners, working on building sites soon to be the new cities. They will not live there themselves, rather they will become the dwellers of overcrowded and badly serviced accommodation.

During the early years of the Spanish tourist industry, people from northern Europe flocked to hotels for their holidays. By 1975 tourists started to buy property ready for retirement. In 1980 privately-owned residential tourist neighbourhoods multiplied like mushrooms after rain, as chalets, bungalows and apartments sprang up all over.

The Spanish Mediterranean coastland has been divided up and developed and is now inhabited by European pensioners. Thus, two types of tourism have developed, the itinerant – accommodation provided by hotels – and the residential – holiday property purchased by the ageing, retired population of the rich European countries. The Spanish Mediterranean has become the largest geriatric centre in the world.

Mijas is a town that has always lived off agriculture, and particularly its vineyards. It is in the midst of the Costa del Sol, but largely due to its urban character it escaped the area's hotel boom for quite a time, only to become one of the most representative residential tourist sites in the region.

The urban centre is now one of the largest shop-windows in the Costa del Sol. But the urban centre is only a tiny part of the municipality of Mijas, among the most extensive in the region with 147 square km of land and 14 km of coastline.

There are more than 100 privately-owned tourist neighbourhoods in this area of around 45,000 inhabitants. The British figure most highly: 20.54%, followed by the Danes and the Germans. The native Mijas population is only 13,000 strong, which means that 70% of the inhabitants of this locality are foreigners, from over 65 different countries.

Traditional agriculture has now disappeared from Mijas. During the 70s' speculation boom, peasants sold their properties at ludicrously low prices, properties which were then converted into dwellings for the foreign tourist. Unaware of such value for urban development, the peasants did not share in the profit. It was left to the property developers and real estate speculators to divide the spoils.

I see these same peasants today sitting on a bench in a park staring at the tourists strolling by. These uprooted men and women have become foreigners in their own land.

Mijas is by no means an isolated case. It is representative of what has been taking place along the Spanish Mediterranean and in the Canary and Balearic Islands. Today, the hotel-based tourist industry is facing a crisis. In Puerto de la Cruz, Tenerife, not a single hotel has been built in the past 10 years, yet in the adjoining Valle de la Orotava, the privately-owned tourist neighbourhoods spread like oil patches on the sea, as chalets and apartments are sold to Germans and northern Europeans.

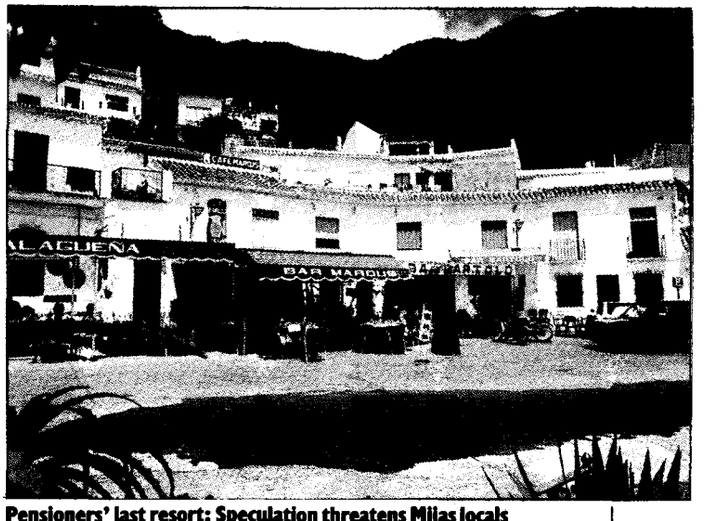
The pensioners' migration has been a silent one. These people are not part of the economic, social or political life; they sit quietly and walk on tiptoes, avoiding the glare of official attention. We estimate that there are about one and a half million foreign pensioners in the Spanish Mediterranean at present. Yet because they are not on any official census, services that they need are not provided.

It is in the field of health that the situation is at its worst. The two largest hospitals in Malaga are full and 60% of the UVI (social services) beds are used up by retired foreigners.

The native population is caught in a trap. Property prices continue to rise, forcing the younger generation to leave the area, just like the old peasants who had to abandon their land. The only thing the natives have left is their right to vote in local elections. But if the foreigners are enfranchised, then we will see Spanish councils in the hands of foreign pensioners. The locals' last semblance of power would be lost.

Both the native and the foreign populations are trapped in a space where real-estate speculation and the lack of administrative, political and urban control will inevitably lead to disaster. Yet what can we expect when land becomes just another commodity in the capitalist market? ●

Translated by Anna de Skalon



Pensioners' last resort: Speculation threatens Mijas locals

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LETTERS

Wilde's Utopia

As someone who considered that economists know the price of everything and the value of nothing, the ghost of Oscar Wilde must be amused at being summoned up by Mike Dietrich and Geoff Hodgson (*MT* July) to enliven *their attack on Pat Devine's* model of negotiated co-ordination. In their dismissal of the wilder pretensions of socialist planning, Pat's critics have forgotten Wilde's abiding contribution to socialist cartography: that every map of the world should contain utopia.

Alternative systems of economic organisation are usually judged in terms of allocative efficiency, flexibility and dynamism, growth performance and impact on the distribution of income. This approach starts from human beings as they are, with their outlooks, capacities and motivations taken as given. It focuses on material outcomes and asks what each major known type of economy does *for* people. Pat proposes an additional, democratic and transformatory standard of assessment: how far a system enables and encourages people to develop the inclination and capacity for self-government?

Pat argues that all existing systems tend to entrench sectional consciousness and behaviour. By contrast, a system based on negotiated co-ordination of economic decisions would set up creative tension between sectional groups. At each operational level of the economy representatives of the relevant sectional stakeholders in the decisions concerned would contribute and respond to the formation of the general interest.

It is far too early in the rethink of the socialist project to pronounce judgement on the feasibility of Pat's scheme. There is one respect in which negotiated co-ordination would be better suited to modern needs than previous forms of planned economy. Historically, central planning has been geared to maximising the volume and growth of material production. In retrospect it looks as if free enterprise capitalism has performed just as well, if not better, as an engine of growth.

But an unrestrained and indefinite expansion of output is no longer a sane perspective for human development. And there is certainly no warrant for Dietrich and Hodgson's uncritical acceptance of any form of technical change, regardless of its social and ecological consequences. The prospect of democratic planning for a damage-free planet could help put Oscar Wilde's invisible land firmly on the map.●

David Purdy, Manchester

Metaphorically Merry

Thank you for publishing the article by Tom Nairn. Despite many obvious differences, the parallel between the situations of Armenia and Scotland is very striking. The Armenians, Latvians, etc, while loyal in most cases to socialism, are nonetheless thoroughly fed up with a position in which their languages take second place. More and more Russians flood into their countries, thus changing their very nature, and major decisions affecting all aspects of their lives are taken in what for them is, culturally, a foreign capital. Just how fed up is obvious from the incredible size, discipline and duration of the demonstrations in Armenia.

The position is exactly the same in Scotland, except that it has probably lasted longer, and we do not, alas, have quite the passion and determination of the Armenians.

It is clear from your rather frivolous illustration at the top of Tom Nairn's article (*MT* June) and your talk of 'Scotland Leading Thatcher A Merry Dance', that you do not really know the position in Scotland. There is nothing even metaphorically merry about political attitudes to Thatcher up here. The majority of Scots are being held back by the failure of the Labour Party and the Left in general to develop policies and campaigns for Scotland as a nation.

A clear-headed, intelligently dialectical re-evaluation of the Scottish and British political set-up, sparing no shibboleths, would lead to the conclusion that the first vital step on the British road to socialism is to win a parliament for Scotland. ●

Andrew L Walker, Stirling

Democratic Participation

Pat Devine (*MT* June) deals with how to plan for growth in a context of democratic participation and the observance of social requirements. I disagree with his concept of negotiated co-ordination, because there is a real conflict between the views of the *economic planner and the* affected interests, which cannot be dealt with by establishing middle ground.

While economic planners must be free to make the most economically efficient plans, society may decide that the social costs are too high. Social pressures must therefore be exerted alongside economic plans.

From this struggle governmental bodies will be compelled to create a framework of controls and incentives, within which the economic plan must operate, creating the greatest possible economic growth within the social and political climate in which people want to live.

This process exists in the *market economies, it could be* developed in economies taking a socialist road, and would flourish in established socialist economies. The conflict between economic and social interests is universal and permanent. The process calls for democratic participation and political movement at every stage.●

Joe Ball, Highgate

User Friendly NHS

Following the NHS articles (*MT* July) we need to look at some of their more uncomfortable proposals, such as separating the financing and providing aspects of health care.

The nature of health care has changed dramatically in the last 40 years. With the rising number of older people close co-operation will be needed between the NHS, community organisations and local authorities if the NHS services are not to be overwhelmed.

The NHS is entering an era of rapidly increasing technology. Much of this is both cost-effective in the long run and patient-friendly, permitting less invasive investigations, shorter hospital stays etc. But the distribution of these resources, rate of introduction, uses to which they are put, are often not controlled and are dependent on the marketing techniques of the companies producing them.

This applies also to drugs, a huge and wasteful part of the NHS budget so far only tackled with any effectiveness by the Tories! Meanwhile many hospitals and GPs' surgeries rely on equipment and technology that is in the dark ages.

How are people to be empowered to make 'choices'? The Tories plan to allow GPs to advertise and enable people to have greater flexibility to choose their doctor. Fine, if they have the information and power to do this. So far only the women's health movement and the growing community health movement have seriously addressed the needs of people on the ground.

The NHS's failure to produce a 'user-friendly' service is partly responsible for the rush into the private sector. ●

Katy Gardner, Liverpool

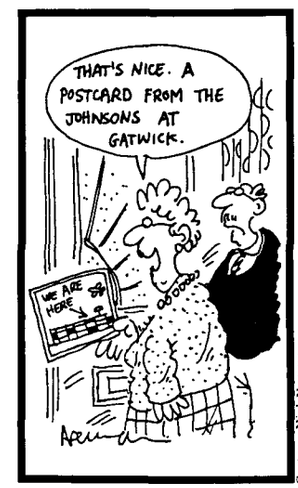
Consumer Capitalism

Your adverts for bicycles and clothes in the July issue are incredibly sexist. In adopting the techniques of consumer capitalism *MT* must set itself some limits. Your drive for designer socialism seems to be in conflict with a commitment to feminism. ●

David Morgan, London

Editorial Note: We welcome your letters to add to discussion. Please send them to *MT* Letters Page, 16 St John Street, London EC1M 4AY. Brevity means you are more likely to be published. We reserve the right to cut. ●

PS



Cartoon: Nick Newman

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Simon Needham

Bet you he drinks Carling Black Label: But if drinking leads to crime and violence, who should carry the can?

Dry Spells Ahead

Alcohol has suddenly become a hot political issue. Hooliganism is the reason. But is it that simple? **Richard Smith** explores the problems posed by alcohol consumption

On the past few months alcohol has moved high up the political agenda. And the government is tying itself into knots over this profitable, pleasurable and destructive drug. It is frantic over the part that alcohol plays in youth violence – both in the home counties and at football matches. A quick fix is wanted for these intransigent social problems, and despite the powerful drink trade it is politically more acceptable to blame the bottle than unemployment, deprivation, or a collapsing education system.

Yet at the same time the government is about to extend licensing hours. From the beginning of September pubs will be free to open from 11 am to 11 pm on weekdays and for another hour on Sunday afternoons; off-licences will also be able to open half an hour earlier – at 8 am. This change should have started at the end of July but has been delayed for 'administrative reasons'. One change that has not been delayed, however, is that drinking-up time will be extended from 10 to 20 minutes.

Some time back the campaigning body Action on Alcohol Abuse wrote to the Home Office asking it to put off the change in licensing hours as a gesture to all the current anxiety over alcohol. The Home Office wrote back to Triple A (as it is popularly known) to say that it should not interpret the delay as being anything to do with its letter.

The concern about alcohol problems may be new but the confusion is not. After years of largely ignoring the mounting evidence on the social, psychological, physical and economic harm done by alcohol, the government last year set up an inter-ministerial committee on alcohol chaired by John Wakenham. Such a committee was recommended in the suppressed (and much leaked) think tank report of 1979, and it may well have been this recommendation that caused the report's suppression: because once a government has such a committee pulling together the 16 government departments concerned with alcohol the contradictions in policies become obvious. For while departments like health fret about the harm done by alcohol, departments like the Treasury are enthusiastic about a substance that in 1986 brought in £6,320m in duty, employs 750,000 people, and accounts for £1,324m in exports.

The main factors that finally caused the inter-ministerial committee to be set up were crime, drunken driving, and the epidemic of alcohol problems among the young. And now the association of alcohol with hooliganism has added fire to the committee members' bellies. But the simultaneous extending of the licensing laws illustrates well the hypocrisy and double messages that are at the heart of most governments' responses to alcohol. (And by governments I mean successive British governments and many foreign govern-

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ments, including the Eastern bloc.)

But, to be fair, the double standards are found in individuals as well as in governments. In England all but 5% of us like a drink, and most of us, even many of us whose lives have been ruined by drink, are convinced that we are social drinkers and that the alcoholics are over there. The main message from recent evidence is, however, that most of the problems associated with alcohol are experienced not by the heaviest drinkers but rather by moderate drinkers – simply because there are so many more of them/us. Policies that concentrate on the heaviest drinkers will thus have only limited success.

'In England all but 5% of us like a drink, and most of us are convinced that we are social drinkers and that alcoholics are over there'

The British spend more on alcohol than on clothes, cars, hospitals, schools, or universities – £16,474m in 1987 or 7% of all consumer expenditure. Between 1950 and 1980 alcohol consumption in Britain roughly doubled – from about 4 litres of pure alcohol each in 1950 to about 8 litres in 1979. The cause of the rise was overwhelmingly the fall in the real price of alcohol and the rise in disposable income. Since reaching a peak in 1979 consumption has largely stabilised, mainly because of the recession. Now it may again begin to rise.

As alcohol consumption rose so did the problems caused by alcohol and so eventually did concern about the problems. It was in 1979 that the Royal College of Psychiatrists produced its report *Alcohol And Alcoholism*. Since then it has produced a second report, the imaginatively – named *Alcohol: Our Favourite Drug*; and the psychiatrists' two reports have been joined in the past few years by reports from the Royal College of General Practitioners and the Royal College of Physicians.

The physicians called their report *A Great And Growing Evil*, borrowing a phrase they first used in 1726 (the time of Hogarth's *Gin Lane*) in a report to government on the dangers of alcohol. For unlike tobacco, which became a mass drug only during the first world war, there is nothing new about alcohol causing problems. Indeed, data going back 300 years shows a recurrent cycle of rising and falling consumption.

What is new is the observation that in any given society consumption and damage are closely related. Sully Lederman a French demographer, noticed the fall in deaths from cirrhosis in France during the war, when wine supplies were restricted, and proposed a mathematical model that linked the number of heavy drinkers in a society and the total amount consumed. His mathematics have not stood the test of time, but the idea of a close relation between consumption and harm is now supported by a mass of evidence.

Countries and occupations that drink heavily have far more deaths from cirrhosis than those that drink little. While over time in virtually all countries studied measures of harm – for instance, deaths from cirrhosis and alcohol poisoning, admissions to hospital for alcohol-related problems, and convictions for drunkenness and drunken driving – rise and fall with consumption. Indeed, most of the evidence suggests that a rise of x in consumption will cause a rise in damage of x^2.

The range of problems associated with alcohol is vast and grows every day. The medical colleges have concentrated on the health problems, but the report of the physicians begins by stating that: 'Alcohol misuse is a social problem with complications'. Yet it is the physical health problems that are most easy to quantify. Although most people know that alcohol may harm the liver and brain, there is no organ in the body that may not be damaged by alcohol. It may, for instance, cause sexual problems and infertility both in men and women, damage in unborn children, and cancers in various parts of the body; and it is much more important than salt in causing high blood pressure.

Alcohol thus accounts for about a quarter of all admissions to medical wards in hospitals (as many as half a million admissions a year in England) and the loss of 8-15m working days a year. It also causes something between 5,000 and 40,000 premature deaths each year, and most of the evidence now supports the higher figure. Suicide, for instance, is between 20 and 60 times more common among 'alcoholics' than among non-alcoholics; between a quarter and a third of completed suicides occur in alcoholics; and up to four-fifths of those who kill themselves have been drinking. About a third of Britain's 5,000 deaths on the road are also associated with alcohol.

But much of the harm caused by alcohol falls on families rather than individuals. One-third of divorce petitions cite alcohol as a contributory factor, and alcohol features in as many as 80% of cases of family violence. Child abuse, both sexual and non-sexual, and child neglect have all been linked with alcohol.

Alcohol misuse is strongly associated with crime. About half of murderers and rapists have been drinking before they commit their crime. But it is not only violent crimes that are associated with alcohol: about half of burglars have been drinking before they commit their offences, and white-collar crime like fraud is also linked with alcohol. Many football hooligans are often drunk when they go on the rampage.

This is where the inter-ministerial committee comes in, but we must be aware of oversimplifying the link between alcohol and social problems like crime. Historical, anthropological, sociological, and psychological evidence shows clearly that while alcohol abuse and drunkenness may be strongly associated with violence and aggression in some groups, societies, and times, they are not in others. For instance, statistical studies have shown a strong association between alcohol consumption and homicides and assault in Sweden and Finland but not in Denmark. The researchers have suggested that the explanation for their results is that Sweden and Finland have much more 'explosive' patterns of drinking than Denmark, which has a more continental pattern. Explosive drinking is the pattern of drinking seen more as you go further north in Britain; fast and heavy drinking of beer and spirits to get drunk, usually on only a few days of the week, without food, and in male-dominated pubs or clubs. Continental drinking is practised more in homes or brasseries in Weybridge and consists of a slow but steady and heavy infusion of drinks like claret, gin, or cointreau. It is usually accompanied by food (or at least peanuts), involves both genders, and is as lethal as explosive drinking – only in a different way.

Few social or criminal problems are solely attributable to alcohol. Many of the acts that men commit – whether it is to batter their wives or commit burglary – might have happened even if they were sober or not dependent on alcohol. Many people get drunk without committing violent offences, and many problem drinkers do not neglect their children. But many who commit violent offences are drunk, and some problem drinkers do neglect their children. If alcohol were abolished from our society tomorrow all of these problems would be unlikely to disappear but they might become less common.

So how might we respond to the problems associated with alcohol? The government is keen to use legal and educational measures, putting the emphasis on the individual, while alcohol campaigners want a more comprehensive approach centred around government action to reduce alcohol consumption. Doctors and politicians in particular have fallen out over who has the prime responsibility for responding to alcohol problems. As recently as 1985 a government minister insisted that alcohol abuse was a matter for professionals and individuals, while doctors have for 10 years been arguing for a political response.

The doctors' argument contains five main strands. The first is that the breadth and depth of alcohol problems means that health and social workers cannot cope alone, particularly as the resources made available for alcohol treatment services are painfully limited. Few if any health or local authorities in Britain have adequate services. A second difficulty with what might be called the treatment response is that many of those suffering from alcohol-related problems (which includes relations and friends of those drinking excessively) never come forward for help. Thirdly, by the time many people do seek help the problems

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Jeff Gates . Diecast Plates : Fig. 8. 1979. Poster Designed by Neville Brody and Tony Cooper. Printed by Jackson Wilson.

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are so serious that little can be done. Hospital doctors, in particular, have been criticised for spending far too much of their time and energy working with people suffering from serious and often irreversible disease rather than with those at an earlier stage more amenable to treatment.

The treatment response is thus insufficient, but nor – and this is the fourth strand of the argument – can much be expected from education. Educational campaigns have not succeeded in reducing alcohol problems nor even in getting people to drink less. Small inroads have been made into changing attitudes towards drinking, but much remains to be done. Some of this 'failure' of education can be put down to naive expectations about how much could be achieved and how quickly, and some to inadequate resources, but most health educators would agree that educational campaigns will never be enough on their own to reduce alcohol-related harm in Britain.

The fifth and crucial strand to the argument that a political response is needed to alcohol problems is the good evidence that political action can be very effective in reducing all sorts of harm. National alcohol consumption can be reduced by increasing the real price of alcohol through taxation, reducing its availability through licensing and other laws, and curtailing its promotion by limiting or banning advertising and sponsorship. Of these three measures there is little doubt that increasing the price is by far and away the most effective. Yet in both the 1986 and 1987 budgets the Chancellor did not increase the duty on alcohol at all, meaning that alcohol became cheaper in real terms.

'What people like me want is a Britain that drinks about half as much as it does now'

In contrast, the government has accepted that increasing the price of tobacco above the rate of inflation reduces smoking, and it has now done this in several budgets. The parallels with alcohol are striking. For years the government resisted using price as a weapon because of the large revenue it got from tobacco and because of the strength of the lobby. Eventually public opinion became too strong to resist completely, although the government's policies on reducing the harm done by smoking are still lacklustre. But eventually public opinion will force the government's hand on alcohol, and the drink trade recognises the approach of this Armageddon.

The factors that hold the government back from effective action on alcohol need to be examined. Firstly, it is the economic benefits of alcohol, many of which come directly in to the Treasury. But too little attention has been paid by government to the economic costs. A British study totted up the costs to industry (sickness, absenteeism etc,), the NHS, social services, and the criminal justice system and put them (conservatively) at £1,600m in 1983. More realistic American studies have produced much bigger figures. Also as beer consumption falls and wine consumption rises the export value of alcohol may disappear.

The second impediment to a political response to alcohol problems is the powerful drink trade. Not only are alcohol producers the biggest contributors to Tory Party funds but also dozens of MPs (of all parties) have direct or indirect financial interests in alcohol – as directors of companies or parliamentary advisers. And the advertising industry, with its extensive political links, is heavily dependent on the drink trade.

Combatting this powerful lobby are some financially puny organisations like Triple A and Alcohol Concern. Yet these bodies – and particularly Triple A, which is unencumbered by government funds (and strings) – are proving remarkably effective and are striking terror into the drink trade, which is anxious that its profits will disappear. The truth is that the tide is beginning to run with those anxious about alcohol problems, which sooner or later the government will recognise. What people like me want is not an alcohol-free country but rather a Britain that drinks about half as much as it does now – about as much, in other words, as we drank in the 50s. Would that be so bad? ●

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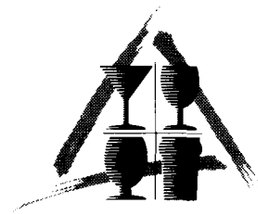

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Moscow In Motion

Immediately after the recent historic Soviet Communist Party Conference, **Monty Johnstone** interviewed Roy Medvedev in Moscow on the prospects for *perestroika*

Roy Medvedev, the Soviet marxist historian and political analyst was interviewed in his fifth floor flat on a housing estate built in the Khrushchev period on the outskirts of Moscow. During the Brezhnev 'stagnation period' he was ostracised and later threatened. None of his numerous books and articles could be published in the Soviet Union, though they were brought out by foreign publishers and journals including *Marxism Today*. A measure of the changes that have taken place in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev is the new position in which he now finds himself being interviewed by Soviet papers, press agencies, television and radio. Recently he held a press conference at the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs' press centre. Soviet publishers are now interested in bringing out his monumental work on the Stalin period, *Let History Judge*, though since it was written 20 years ago he would first like time to prepare a new edition.

What are your general impressions of the recent conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union? Do you think it represents a significant advance in Soviet society?

The conference certainly represents a significant step forward in what we can call the democratisation of our society. I think it was an interesting and important event. People followed everything that was published and shown on tv. Even though it wasn't shown in full on tv, those parts that were shown aroused great public interest. Ten or 20 years ago when party congresses took place people didn't bother to read the papers because they weren't interested in Brezhnev's reports and the speeches that followed them. This conference was different because there was real debate and controversy. The delegates' speeches were not all alike. Gorbachev's report was perhaps rather too long by Western standards though not by Soviet ones. He combined two reports in one. The conference revealed the different tendencies, points of view, trends and even factions in the party, although officially the existence of factions is denied.

Do you think they are sufficiently firmly formed to be called factions? Aren't they something rather looser?

They aren't of course factions as understood in common political vocabulary as something organised. They are political trends to be understood in a looser sense.

Do you think that these trends exist throughout the party or only in any stable form in the leading bodies of the party?

They are characteristic of the whole party at all levels. The party is not responding uniformly to the process of *perestroika*.

Do you think that if one had to identify these tendencies or trends with leading figures in them one could talk very approximately of a Gorbachev trend, a Ligachev trend and a Yeltsin trend?

It is possible to speak of a Gorbachev trend and a Ligachev trend but not of a Yeltsin one. Yeltsin doesn't represent any particular trend now, though there are other people who think the same way. But Yeltsin has shown that he is broken as a politician and cannot lead any trend within the party. There are very many different trends in the party but the party conference represented three main tendencies. The first one, if one wants to start with that, is the tendency of the opponents of *perestroika* in general. They are people who want to return to the past, people who are being thrown out of social and political life by *perestroika*. There are very many such opponents and they still have a huge influence on the running of the country.

But they didn't express themselves openly at the conference.

They mostly kept silent. They were criticised at the conference. I have in mind the top levels of the bureaucracy – people whose activities symbolise stagnation and what we refer to as the braking mechanism holding back *perestroika*. They didn't reply to the criticisms. For example, the ministry of finance was strongly criticised but the minister didn't come into the discussion to explain his position to the conference. The huge and extremely rich ministry of land improvement and water conservancy also came under sharp attack for doing a great deal of ecological damage to our country, but that minister didn't say anything either.

Although these people were represented at the conference they realised that if they spoke they would get a hostile reception. Only one person from this tendency spoke at the conference, and that was the writer Bondarev. He represents that part of our literature which *perestroika* is casting aside. People of a different level are now coming to the fore in our literature and in our culture generally. People like Bondarev and Markov were for 20 years the bosses of our literature. They formed a mafia which decided the policy of the publishing houses and determined who should and should not be published and what royalties they should receive. Now it is not these people who decide – they have lost power.

And the second trend?

The second trend is represented by people who are supporters of *perestroika*. They understand that our economy is in a critical state, as Gorbachev said. They want to restructure it but without *glasnost*, without press freedom, with democratisation but by old administrative methods and orders. They are people who come out against corruption and abuses and oppose the mafias. They are mostly honest Communists and Soviet people, but they have got used to the old ways of working. The most striking representative of this group is (party secretary) Ligachev, who himself organised the Nina Andreeva article.[1] But they won't achieve their objectives without using the levers of *glasnost* against the bureaucracy. Without a free press it is simply impossible to formulate a point of view.

This group embraces the majority of regional and city party secretaries, the majority of the apparatus. It was quite active at the conference where its attacks on the press were applauded. It is characterised by both innovation and conservatism, impulses to move forward and dogmatism. It combines both old stereotypes and new thinking. It occupies an intermediate position. It is the strongest group in our party but it does not dominate it because complete power in the party is not in its hands. In his conference speech Ligachev warned Gorbachev, and it was an unmistakeable warning: 'Without us you wouldn't have become general secretary of the party'–that is, without the votes in March 1985 of politbureau members Chebrikov, Gromyko and Solomentsov whom he named.

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And the third tendency is Gorbachev's?
Yes, the third group can be called that of Gorbachev himself. This group strives for *perestroika*, for the reform of all economic and political structures. I myself don't understand some of their reforms, for instance some of Gorbachev's conference proposals for changes in the political system. But at all events they are people looking for a way out for our country, for means to take it further forward. They want to give socialism a new face and make it more attractive. Their intention is to do so through democracy, *glasnost* and a relatively free press and through involving the whole people in the process of *perestroika*. And, you see, there is a conservatism to be overcome not only in the apparatus but also among ordinary people, among workers and peasants who need to be got to work better.

And Yeltsin?
Yeltsin represents vanguardism in the party. He doesn't represent a trend as such but only some individuals. He wants to push *perestroika* ahead more quickly, more energetically, but this is not realistic. Yeltsin is saying much that Gorbachev was saying at the beginning, but there is very little support for this now. Yeltsin's political collapse is due to not appreciating that if we start going too fast it will lead to the end of *perestroika* rather than its success.

In our conditions it is possible for *perestroika* to move forward fairly quickly but not by leaps. Politics is the art of the possible. Yeltsin always spoke of a time span of one to two years. When he went to a factory when he was Moscow secretary he used to say: 'I give you two years to fulfil *perestroika* here.' That sort of thing is not possible. And now we see that neither he nor any of the enterprises that he visited have achieved this goal.

How far do you think that in the interests of pursuing the politics of the possible Gorbachev has made certain compromises with Ligachev and his tendency, and how far would you see those compromises reflected in the conference decisions?
Gorbachev has always proceeded by means of compromises. There is no other road open to him. The leader of the party and the country emerges from the same stratum that represents the old elite and the previous epoch. Gorbachev was elected from among the Brezhnev elite. He is always making compromises with Ligachev's group and even with the conservatives. But there are compromises and compromises: those which take things backwards and those which move them forward. Gorbachev has shown himself to be a master of compromises, and each of his compromises enables the country to take one step forward and sometimes more than one. The party conference represented another step forward.

The Guardian

Roy Medvedev: 'I was optimistic when we were living through the worst times'

Do you think that this compromise between Gorbachev and his trend, on the one hand, and Ligachev and his trend, on the other, is a long-term compromise which will last a number of years or a short-term one liable to break asunder in the foreseeable future?
Each compromise has its time span. I don't think the compromise between Gorbachev's and Ligachev's groups will last very long. But it is not excluded that it could last for two to three years. The main idea of this compromise is to defeat the other main group – the most conservative group of bureaucrats represented by the officials of the ministries and those departments of the central committee which deal directly with different branches of industry and agriculture like energy, construction and transport. They feed off that power and are often corrupted by it. We need to do away with these surplus parts of our apparatus. Ligachev and the regional party secretaries also understand that these are bureaucratic obstacles that need to be removed as they are hampering *perestroika*. It is quite unnatural that one-third of the adult population should be employed in performing administrative functions of one kind or another. It would be quite reasonable if the service sector were bigger than the industrial sector, for instance, as this is a feature of industrially developed countries. But it is unacceptable that a third of the workforce should be employed in administration. In general the compromise is directed against the most reactionary bureaucratic section of the party and against the opponents of *perestroika* as a whole.

'Gorbachev has shown himself to be a master of compromises'

Do you think that in two to three years' time it might come to a showdown between the supporters of Gorbachev and those of Ligachev? Is there a danger that, as in 1964 against Khrushchev, an alliance of different trends might be formed to get rid of Gorbachev? In this case an alliance of the Ligachev forces with the directly anti-*perestroika* trend taking advantage perhaps of the fact that the economic situation had not adequately improved?
Of course there are various possibilities. For instance, one of them is that anti-*perestroika* forces might consolidate themselves, win support from some of the forces now supporting *perestroika* and overthrow Gorbachev. But this is not the most likely possibility. It is more likely that the anti-*perestroika* forces will be thrown out as they don't respond to national interests. And there is a hope that people now associated with Ligachev's group will learn how to speak to people and how to work in a democratic way. Some of the secretaries of district party committees may learn some lessons which will enable them to work for *perestroika* in the proper way.

So, broadly speaking, Roy Aleksandrovich, you are optimistic about the prospects for *perestroika*?
I was optimistic when we were living through the worst times here. I said then that *perestroika* and changes of a completely new kind were possible in our country. It may then have seemed

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the least likely prospect, but there are many examples of what seems least likely coming about because basic national interests assert themselves. In that respect I am an optimist. I understand that Gorbachev personally might suffer a defeat. He might make a serious mistake, take a false step. A monetary reform or price reform that was unpopular might be used by demagogues against him. The country might again, for a short time, enter a period of stagnation but that would once again come to an end.

The election of Chernenko[2] was an absolutely false step for the country. In the interests of a small group, time was lost which was precious for the country. For the sake of a fatally-ill man a whole year in the life of the country was sacrificed. Such a situation can no longer be accepted. Time is very important for the Soviet Union because such a great power cannot allow itself to fall behind countries like Brazil or South Korea. Ultimately the national interests of the country will carry the day.

What do you think of the reforms in the political system put forward in Gorbachev's report. How do you assess the proposal that in future first secretaries of party committees should be nominated as chairpersons of soviets.

Frankly speaking, I don't understand these proposals and I don't know how this system will work. It seems to me to be a reform in the spirit of Khrushchev when he thought that something needed doing but did not test it experimentally. I cannot imagine how it will work on the level of a city, a district, a region or a republic. I think the new system is simply impossible locally and will immediately show its ineffectiveness. Gorbachev argued for a separation between party and state organs with each getting on with its own work – the party concentrating on political strategy and policy and the soviets on economic and other matters. But combining the posts of party secretary and Soviet chairperson in one person will have just the opposite effect. It hasn't been thought through. It's just going to lead to confusion and the mixing up of functions. Moreover it's not realistic. I know in practice how people in these posts operate: even now they are overloaded with work.

Academician Abalkin in his conference speech expressed disagreement with this proposal of Gorbachev's. If I had been a delegate at the party conference I would also have voted against it. But many voted to accept it because they believe in Gorbachev.

What do you think of Gorbachev's constitutional proposals for setting up a Congress of People's Deputies meeting once a year and electing a president with considerable powers and a smaller two-chamber Supreme Soviet whose members would be full-time parliamentarians?

Maybe it is easier to imagine how the changes at the top will work because every leader of our party eventually became leader of the state. Stalin became prime minister. Khrushchev became prime minister. Brezhnev became president of the Supreme Soviet. Now Gorbachev will get the post of president with increased powers.

But I don't know how the new-style Supreme Soviet in Moscow will operate when even the present type of Supreme Soviet hasn't learnt to work democratically.[3] What will the 400-450 delegates do who will be full-time deputies of the Supreme Soviet? Great Britain, for instance, has very old parliamentary traditions which go back hundreds of years. But here unfortunately people are not accustomed to such things and they will have to learn a lot. It will take time.

'I don't see the activisation of national movements as a "time bomb" against democratisation'

Next spring elections to the new Congress of People's Deputies are due to take place. Do you believe they will allow for contests between candidates with different platforms and in a certain sense maybe even proto-parties? For instance, if you have green candidates standing on a distinctive green programme might this not represent something approximating to a green party and therefore a move towards the *de facto* ending of the one-party system?

There is no doubt that such 'informal' movements and organisations will try to stand their own candidates in the elections to the Congress of People's Deputies. They openly say this. But I don't know whether they will be allowed to or not. Under our system an electoral commission decides which organisations have and do not have the right to put up candidates. Such unofficial organisations have not been allowed to stand candidates in the past. They were considered undesirable elements in our society, and many of their representatives were arrested or put under permanent pressure by the authorities. Also, judging by the conference resolutions, there are different sorts of informal groups – useful and harmful. It is impossible yet to say what will happen in the future and who will be allowed to stand.

Some commentators have described the national question in the Soviet Union as a 'time bomb' under the whole process of democratisation. Do you foresee such a danger? Do you think that solutions will be found to such problems as Nagorno-Karabakh[4] and the demands of the Baltic republics for greater political and economic autonomy?

I must say that I don't see the activisation of national movements as a 'time bomb' against democratisation. It is a factor for the development of *perestroika*. But there are different types of national movement. In Azerbaijan, for instance, they go on the streets with slogans like, 'Make Ligachev general secretary', because they liked his speech which said that Nagorno-Karabakh would always remain a part of Azerbaijan. In Armenia they demonstrate with different slogans.

'Lenin, Party, Gorbachev!'

Yes, as against 'Stalin, Brezhnev, Ligachev!' in Azerbaijan, I suppose! The situation in the Baltic republics is quite different. In Estonia, for instance, they've set up a very strong People's Front For *Perestroika*. They see in *perestroika* the guarantee for their national traditions and for democratisation.

Yes, there's obviously a big difference between these positive developments in the Baltic republics and the conflict that has developed between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh accompanied by prolonged strikes and inter-ethnic violence. If no solution can be found to this problem in the period ahead, is it not going to produce a backlash against *perestroika* with some people saying, as our driver was saying today, that in Stalin's times such disorders didn't happen?

It's not true that such things didn't happen in Stalin's time, though of course they were cruelly suppressed. What the driver said was the idealisation of Stalin's time. There were strikes, uprisings, urban disorders and mutinies in the armed forces. Because of the absence of *glasnost* people didn't know about them. Certainly it is essential to solve the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh one way or another. There are no problems for which no solution can be found. Maybe though some people will still remain dissatisfied, but that's only to be expected. However it can take a long time to solve that problem, which is after all 1,600 years old.

But Gorbachev hasn't got that much time to solve it!

I can give no prognosis here. It is a regional problem. In the same way that the problem of Northern Ireland hasn't killed British democracy . . .

But there are dangers . . .

. . . the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh won't destroy *perestroika*. It is a problem that concerns only a small part of the Soviet population and it will be solved either by compromise or by force. But in the end it will be solved. ●

1 A long article which appeared in one of the central committee's papers, *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, in March under the name of Nina Andreeva, a Leningrad chemistry lecturer, challenging the whole course of democratisation and *glasnost*. It was strongly attacked by *Pravda*.

2 Chernenko, an undistinguished apparatchik, was appointed party general secretary after Andropov's death in 1984 in preference to Gorbachev, and died the next year.

3 The present practice is for those elected to the Supreme Soviet to combine working at their normal jobs with fulfilling their duties as deputies and attending the sessions of the Supreme Soviet which normally meet briefly twice a year.

4 An autonomous region which has since 1923 been attached to Azerbaijan but whose predominantly Armenian population have been seeking to be transferred to Armenia. Azerbaijan has refused this request made by the region's elected representative body.

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Citizen Gains

The crisis of service-delivery is central to the crisis of the Left. **Paul Corrigan, Trevor Jones, John Lloyd** and **Jock Young** outline a new deal for the public services

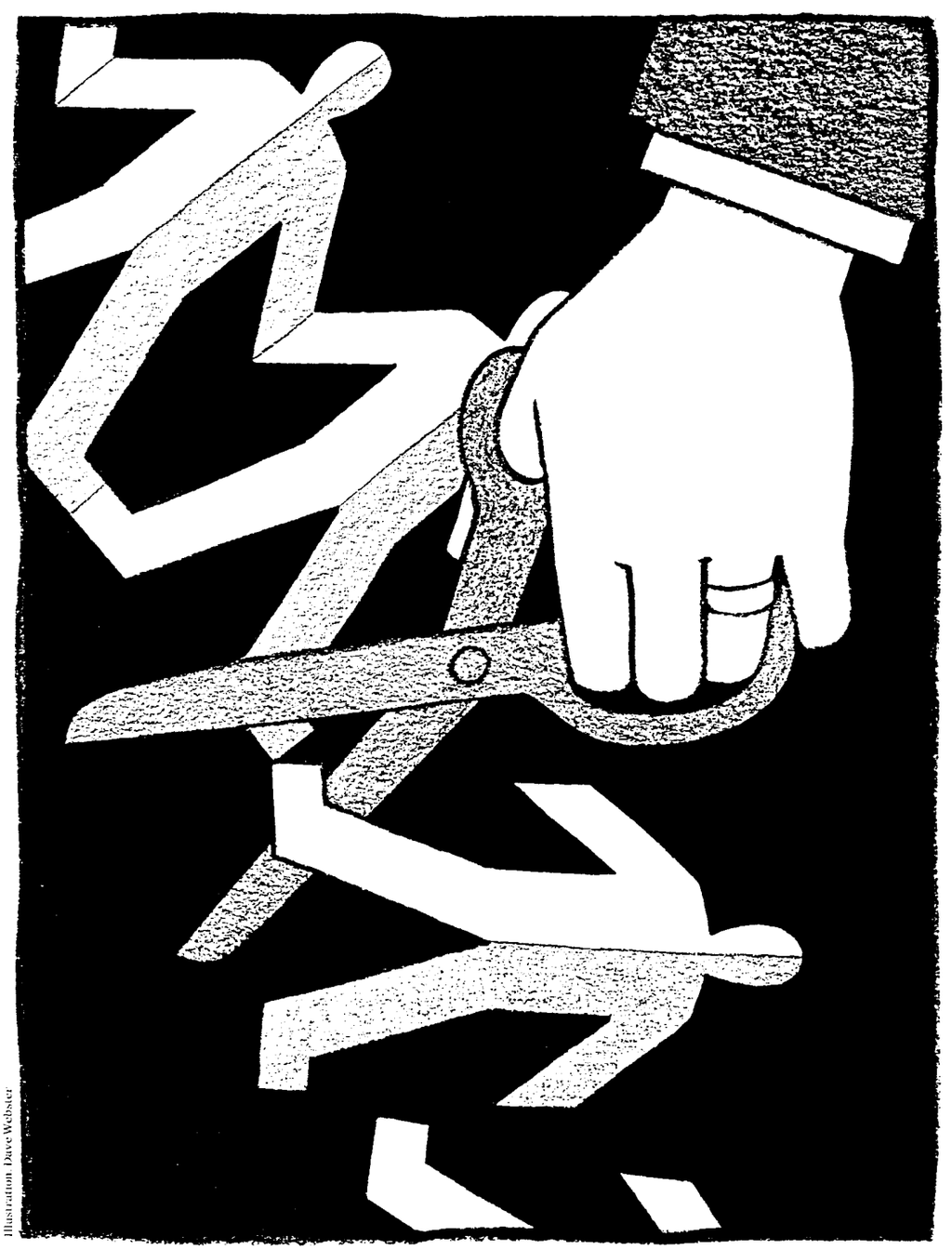

Illustration Dave Webster

If the Left cannot carry conviction in the area of public service, it cannot carry conviction anywhere else. For a century, it has made the sphere of public provision its own: in shaping it, defining it, providing a functional morality for it, protecting it, it has constructed its largest contribution to national life – and international, too, since the ideas and practices first generated in the UK were picked up and developed worldwide.

That is why a crisis in the public service area is always at best an ambiguous matter for the Left – even when the crisis can plausibly be 'blamed' on the Conservative government. For in doing so much to construct this sphere, we have raised reasonable expectations that the network of Labour institutions – Labour-held local authorities, trade unions, bureaucracies created under Labour's aegis, even local Labour parties – can and should be responsible for its efficient maintenance. Insofar as the Left has failed to convince the public that they have been so responsible, so the Left has suffered.

The problems posed by the government's attitude towards local government have been made clear, but what has also been needed was a determined and profound reflection on the nature of the Left's commitment to and practice of public provision. It is an indictment, most of all of the social-democratic wing of the Left (we use the word quite distinctly from the party meaning it has come to have), that it did not do so: and that the only people who did so were those who commanded the 'new left' local authorities – as the Greater London Council, the Inner London Education Authority, many London boroughs, Manchester and, at different times, others (Walsall, Edinburgh). Their 'municipal new leftism' has itself now failed and is either conducting a long and bitter retreat at the expense, most of all, of their authority's citizens: or adopting policies which implicitly recognise that their former stance was one which ignored or downgraded the needs of the majority in their area of responsibility. But – to restate the point – at least the municipal new leftists *tried:* and while many Labour authorities conducted their affairs extremely efficiently and with little public resonance (the borough of Sedgefield, near Darlington, with a rock-solid Labour majority has kept it so by a standard efficiency which won commendation from the Audit Commission), those on the Left critical of municipal new leftism have not yet cared to elaborate their critique into an alternative.

Opposition to municipal new leftism is not, however, the main reason for doing so. The main reason is to give the Left a basis for proposing itself as a governing force again: to allow it to rebuild a functional basis for wielding power. As we have suggested, a functioning philosophy in the public sphere is

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crucial to the Left's success more generally: and since it is faced with a government whose leader has thrown down the most arrogant of gages – 'There is no such thing as society: there are only individuals and their families' – it has every reason to believe that hard work in this area could mean success.

We do not think that the crisis of welfar-ism and of the public services is caused by 'Thatcherism', or, more simply, by cuts in spending. More precisely, while we can see that a certain kind of crisis is or can be caused by expenditure cuts – that will be specially hard-felt in the social security reforms which came into force in April – that is not the crisis we address and we think it is the less important in the sense that it is shorter run and capable of relatively easy 'solution' in its own terms.

A crisis of *service delivery* would have occurred even had Labour been in power over the past decade: and though it might have been masked for some time by increased resources, the longer-run problems would have asserted themselves even more powerfully than they already had in the 1970s, when Labour held power. It is still worth saying (though the point is now more widely taken than in the past) that the provision of resources is always and everywhere subject to a series of restraints – restraints which are probably stronger now, as people get used to lower tax bands. Increased expenditure should *never*, in any case, be used as a proxy for better management and better direction of existing resources.

We do not deny or minimise the very serious problems in the health service, the social services, the provision of welfare, the provision of legal services and other sectors which the squeeze on funding has had and will continue to have. But we want to locate a large part of the crisis where it must, ultimately, return: in the relationship between *citizens* and the state, and the institutions of the state. In very large part that is because it is there where democracy either flourishes or decays – and it is our belief that it is decaying. In part, too, it is because it is that complex of relationships which socialism had sought to make its own – many of them it, after all, created – and which it has the responsibility to address now.

Social democracy in practice *did* things to and for people. It did things which were self-evidently good: it brought and ensured full employment; made education more accessible; extended social security; improved the housing stock; made health provision free at the point of use, and steadily increased the range of medical services. While these things have not, of course, made the British people *equal*, still there is little dispute that they have improved the life standards and life chances of the very great majority.

But there were, of course, dangers. The largest of these we can characterise in this way: the form of social democracy practised by successive Labour and Conservative governments in Britain functioned, very largely, at the technical and expert and bureaucratic levels. It did not really seek to mobilise a political base of support – or, for that matter, of involved criticism – nor did it propose a relationship which was other than that of the giver and receiver. The relationship had no real possibilities of reciprocity. Benefits of all kinds were given because of a particular *state* – being unemployed, being old, being poor, being a mother. Council housing was given on need (it was not of course always *available* on need) and, until recently, it was maintained, painted, repaired by the public authority, not the tenant. The size, curricula, teaching methods of schools were determined by politicians and expert debate, and given to the people whose children were to be educated: parents were given no statutory, and often no informal, rights of consultation or even of information. Impressionistically, we can say that the collective state of minds of the givers was of high-minded, somewhat self-sacrificing public service which tended to become routinised, bureaucratically imperialist and cynical: on the part of the receivers, it was of gratitude and a real sense of an improved and more varied world which tended to become complaining, impatient of restrictions, distrustful of 'them' and their social engineering and latterly – among those for whom public provision largely shapes their lives – dependency.

This mutual loss of the original relationship of caring giver and grateful receiver has found no real replacement. The Conservative Party, until recently, administered local authorities in much the same way as Labour councils – though the authorities the former controlled tended to have fewer receivers within their jurisdiction. Within the Labour Party, the Left has sought to encourage those to whom public provision was targeted to demand more of it at lower prices or free. It has mainly been the Left which initiated a movement of local authority resources into the funding of new or existing businesses – largely in order to provide jobs, and to counter the effects of de-industrialisation – and wholly the Left which took authorities into the very active promotion of civil, racial and sexual rights. Insofar as there has been political innovation within the local authority service provision, it has come from the Left: though that wave of innovation has now clearly at least stalled – in part because it has met a good deal of popular hostility, in part because it can no longer be afforded.

We have noted in passing that the crisis which afflicts the public sector *did* receive a response from the Left: that response came in the form of municipal new leftism. Elected to many councils in the 70s, this strand claimed to represent a new broom, sweeping away the old Labour corruptions. But to what extent did they mark a radical break?

On taking power, many of the new groups discarded or ignored the experts in place: they took their instructions 'directly from the community'. But the community which informed them was in part their own creature: local government officers whom they had appointed to represent women, ethnic minority groups, community workers to whom they had given grants, trade union officials who worked in the town hall. And the people who were councillors in one borough were often officers in the next. In listening to the community, they forgot they were listening to their own voice. If old-style social democracy bestowed problems on people, the new Left projected their own problems on to shadows of people.

'If the Left cannot carry conviction in the area of public service, it cannot carry conviction anywhere else'

In this sense it was less a break with past practice than a distortion and amplification of it. Perceiving that the working class, especially in cities, was fragmenting, the new Left constituted a new series of groupings which it then attempted to strike much the same set of relations as its predecessors had with their electoral base.

The closed world of the town hall and the community centre created a mutually-reinforcing circle of minority representatives, police monitoring groups, political committees and community leaders. A peculiar idealism pervaded their thinking: words, names, labels became much more important than actions or the material change of concrete achievement. Brecht's remark that 'progress was about moving forward, not just being progressive', was turned on its head.

It is now said – now that some of the impetus for the town hall Left is running out and many members of it are themselves seeking correctives to courses they had earlier charted – that this strand of politics produced more documents than changes and that they were saved from doing real damage by bureaucrats who kept the show more or less on the road. There is much in this: certainly, many of the ILEA's initiatives in anti-racism and anti-sexism did not reach the schools – though they did have a profound effect on Fleet Street. But to take this line is to undervalue the movement in two ways.

First, it discounts its few achievements. The most obvious of these was to identify the limits of social-democratic provision, to call attention to the break-up of a homogeneous working-class base which accepted and benefited from homogeneous policies, and in some areas, to throw up useful innovations and ideas – such as contract compliance sanctions to promote equal opportunities in supplier companies, or experiments (in the case of the Greater London Enterprise Board,

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largely unsuccessful ones) with local employment initiatives.

Second, the movement was seen and is still seen in some quarters as 'true' socialism, as against the more timid version of it practised by the Labour leadership. A full account of the town hall Left still has to be written: but it is already clear that it has largely been a failure. In identifying cardboard villains (as the police, for example) and in elevating ethnic and sexual minorities to the beatification of victimhood; in indulging in gestures of defiance which were bound to collapse from lack of public support, it evaded rather than faced the issues confronting it – both those of the government's making and those of its own. It has left little in the way of a legacy: and the direction in most Labour-controlled town halls is now rightwards.

'The fundamental flaw of social-democratic relationships has been their one way dimension'

The adoption of a radical agenda by some Labour authorities, especially in London, was not generally the *prime* cause of the alienation of working-class support, where that has happened. The process was much more complex. Among some groups support was increased – not surprisingly, since they were the beneficiaries of the new politics. Those alienated were generally those who *already* had a large scepticism over locally-provided services, and saw the sponsorship of minority groups as simply an added aggravation, one in which they had no say.

It is closer to the mark that the radical left agendas were bolted on to a machine which had already run down. Inefficiency and delay had become endemic to many public services: these flowed from a lack of direction, of strategy, of discipline and of internal cohesion – overarching all of these, a lack of public support and involvement. This, the greatest lack, to an extent explains the others: for where the object of the services is treated merely as a passive recipient, then the dynamic relationships will tend to be confined to the service providers. The awful warning of the potential for decay in such relationships was found in the case of the Nye Bevan lodge, in Southwark, where local politicians, administrators and union officials either actively or passively conspired to deprive poor and elderly people of their remaining dignity.

We have said that a fundamental flaw of the social-democratic relationships adumbrated since the war has been their *one way* dimension: that is, that there was little reciprocity in these relationships. We propose, therefore, the elaboration of a public contract between public provision and its institutions on the one hand, and the people on the other. This contract, which we hope will be the subject of debate and development, would be composed of a network of *rights* and *duties*. It would have a number of features, and would exist within a certain set of explicit assumptions.

First, that the 'output' of public services be subject to measurable criteria and judged, at least in part, according to these criteria. This would counteract the increasing tendency to import extraneous yardsticks which divert attention away from real falling standards. For example: the police argue that they have contained increasing community tension; that they are subject to increasingly violent attacks; and that the structures of society, especially the family, are breaking down and imposing larger demands upon them. All of these are or may be true: yet the fact remains that the clear-up rate of crime has fallen by 1% per year for the past decade while police resources have risen.

This is not to deny the obvious fact that education, social services, policing and other sectors cannot possibly be regarded as being wholly self-contained, occupying their own discrete worlds. It *is* to assert that if they continually pass the bucks to and fro among each other, or between themselves and 'the family' or 'the media' or 'society', then any efforts to determine the possible solutions to problems fail at the early level of measurability.

Criteria for performances are, of course, presently used by public authorities. But they tend to be internal, and opaque. We argue for criteria which are published and made widely available: and which are the result of the most extensive consultation – including polling – and dialogue between local representatives, officials and the public. If they are to challenge the hegemony of the market, public authorities must be at least as concerned as private companies to discover what people want. They have, or should have, a large advantage over private companies: that of providing people with a democratic redress against inefficiency and poor performance. But they must provide their electorates with clear yardsticks of the performance they have the right to expect first.

Second, we must recognise the concept of *merit*. It should be recognised – for some on the Left, rehabilitated – in a number of ways. In the first place, it must function as a crucial criterion in education: too often, especially in inner-city schools, it has been tacitly or overtly abandoned in favour of a pseudo-egalitarianism which levels down. It must be accepted that there will be inequities in performance, but that meritocratic performance is the goal. Naturally, some will need more help – the application of more resources – in order to assist achievement.

In the second place, it must function as the main criterion in the performance of public service itself: that is, that those who provide the services – especially the managers and administrators – must be promoted and rewarded for the attainment of targets which are measured on the quality and/or quantity of service provided. Managers in the private sector are, in general, rewarded on the basis of profits achieved: it is no less important in the public sphere that rewards should be based on firm criteria – but that these are the satisfaction of *needs*, rather than the attainment of profits. Once again, of course, the practice of promoting on merit, or recognising merit and of relying on those who demonstrate merit is not absent in the public sphere. But it is often underplayed, even distrusted. This attitude springs, in part, from the lack of adequate criteria: once these are agreed and set, the attainment of them is to a very large extent the measurement of merit.

Third, and most important in this context, we need to be concerned to create the basis for a reciprocal relationship or set of relationships. This is the most critical because, while measurement of output and the concept of merit in attainment must be assumed, these will reproduce the failures of former social democratic provision if they do not meet a response from 'below'.

The government claims it is stimulating such a response. But that is wrong. The government uses the market as a solvent for most social problems. Dominant within this view is the individual as consumer – informed, involved, able to make choices. But in the case of the public services this is not the case.

The case of education offers a clear example. Central to the government's proposals are the twin goals of increasing the autonomy of school headteachers; and increasing the scope for parental influence over the schools to which they send their children. Implicit in this approach is the possibility – even, probability – that those schools which operate in the way the government hopes and expects will demand even greater independence from national criteria and guidelines – and, crucially, demand local independence in fixing pay and conditions, presently governed nationally.

There are some attractions in this approach: the most obvious is the greater involvement of parents. Further, more power to the headteacher is not simply a Conservative theme: the present ILEA leadership has also criticised its own past practices of regarding headmasters as a transmission belt for centrally-decided objectives and strategies, and has proposed more local independence and higher rewards. On these two broad issues, it is likely we have a rough political consensus – which is likely to be a good thing for children.

However, the Tory proposals fall too short: and by being governed by the market, they have imported ideological criteria which will impede, even des-

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troy, the objectives to which they are publicly committed – leading to reasonable speculation that their real objectives are somewhat different.

First, the government has not sought to revive the idea of, and support for, education for all. Instead, it administers the inheritance of a system designed to attain that (though it never did live up to the promise of the rhetoric) while focusing almost entirely on the shortcomings of the comprehensive system. That these shortcomings are many there is no doubt: but that an antidote which promotes centres of excellence, or magnet schools, will leave behind legions of schoolchildren does not seem capable of refutation either. Improvements in schools have to take place within an explicitly articulated framework of support for a popular education system which is the centrepiece of a future government: a system which addresses both the ambitions of parents and their children and the needs of a technically restructured economy.

Second, a market in education merely confirms and deepens the existing divisions and disadvantages. At the expensive end of the education market – the big 'public' schools – parents do not need to become involved because they are, largely, of a cultural whole with the ethos of the school. Everyone knows what is to be done: the parents' place in life is to be at least passed on, if not improved. Given large resources, the disorientation which sets in when a child is taken from home, and the network of largely implicit shared assumptions, values and beliefs, the technical task is not very hard.

At the inner-city end, the task appears almost impossible. The social dislocations have helped create families with only one parent; or parents who are themselves ill-educated; and/or parents whose own financial problems press so hard upon them as to allow little time for participation. Comparing these two extremes – public school and inner-city – is to obtain a vivid picture of the most resources being available for those who need them least.

To empower these latter schools' headmasters and parents to improve their schools will take preparation. If we are to give rights and ask for the exercise of responsibilities, we must ensure that the actual performance is not a mockery of the aims. To achieve a real involvement and real reciprocity in the public sphere, people must be educated, trained and encouraged to exercise the duties of citizenship. That aim will involve the creation of new structures, publicly-funded and voluntary, which begins the construction of what we need: local institutions of the public sphere which are the possession of all – not of the bureaucrat or the activist.

'It is already clear that the town hall Left has largely been a failure'

The duties of citizenship have to go beyond the payment of taxes. The striking of a new social-democratic relationship, where the impulse comes from below and above, can't be done either by fiat or by the insertion of the market, or the present combination of both. Nor can it be achieved by the simple application of money. The task facing opposition parties on the lookout for a 'post-Thatcherite' politics is only in part a matter of 'coming up with new ideas' (since, apart from anything else, there are quite a lot of good old ideas – as the Right found when they embarked on their intellectual binge of the 70s). The other part of the task is developing a practice of politics which gives democratic principles flesh: which breaks at once the alienation of the populace from the political process and dethrones the obtrusive activist – or, rather, transforms that figure into a facilitator of involvement rather than a proxy for it.

The core idea we seek to present is *the reconstruction of a civic culture:* one founded securely on an extension of citizens' rights and responsibilities. The Left's traditions in this, which have seen some considerable achievements, have decayed in many instances: we have a government which has taken full advantage of that decay to lop off branches and attack the root of the tradition. The re-energising of the civic culture is among the most important tasks facing the opposition. ●

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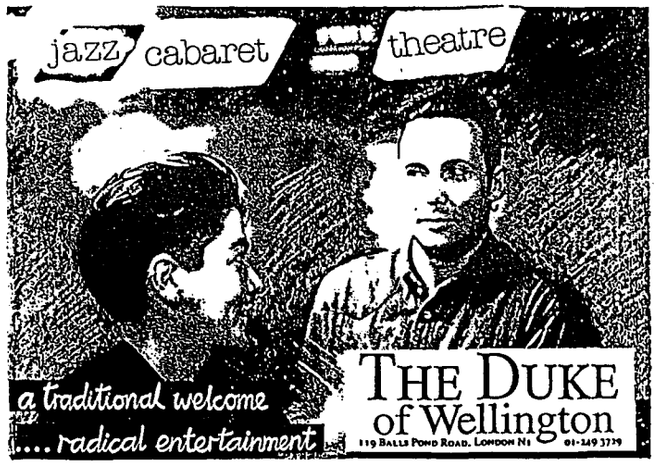

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Green Alert

Prolonged drought in the American Midwest has unleashed a new wave of speculation and concern about global warming, the result of the 'greenhouse effect'. Putting international environmental issues at the heart of the political agenda, predictions about fundamental changes in the earth's climate have led to inconclusive debate and confusion. Introducing this special survey, Fred Steward examines the growing significance of green politics and argues that current threats to the environment are forging a new internationalism, which presents a challenge to the socialist tradition

Green politics continues to gain momentum in the UK and across the world. Its appeal crosses different classes and cultures and projects a widely acceptable image. At the same time it shakes the ground of established politics based on a traditional view of industrial and economic progress. These tremors are also felt within socialist politics whose agenda has been largely shaped by industrialism and advocacy of material advance. The rise of the green phenomenon offers a refreshing challenge both to the political mainstream and to the Left.

The growth of environmentalism as a popular movement arises both from the shock of the global threats to which it seeks to respond and from the power of planetary purpose that it espouses. The threats continue to shape the awareness of us all. Chernobyl shockingly turned the abstract mathematics of rare risks into a real radiation catastrophe whose invisible cloud respected no national boundaries. Suddenly the safety of the Sunday roast on British dinner tables was tied to the inadequacies of Soviet nuclear reactor design and management. The dramatic discovery of a hole in the ozone layer threw a public spotlight onto what had previously been an arcane dispute about the chemistry of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). The everyday aerosol can was abruptly implicated in the integrity of the stratosphere and its global effects. The devastating drought in the US Midwest gives a hint of the vulnerability of food supplies even in the well-fed developed world to climatic changes such as the 'greenhouse effect', which was given worldwide attention at the recent Toronto conference.

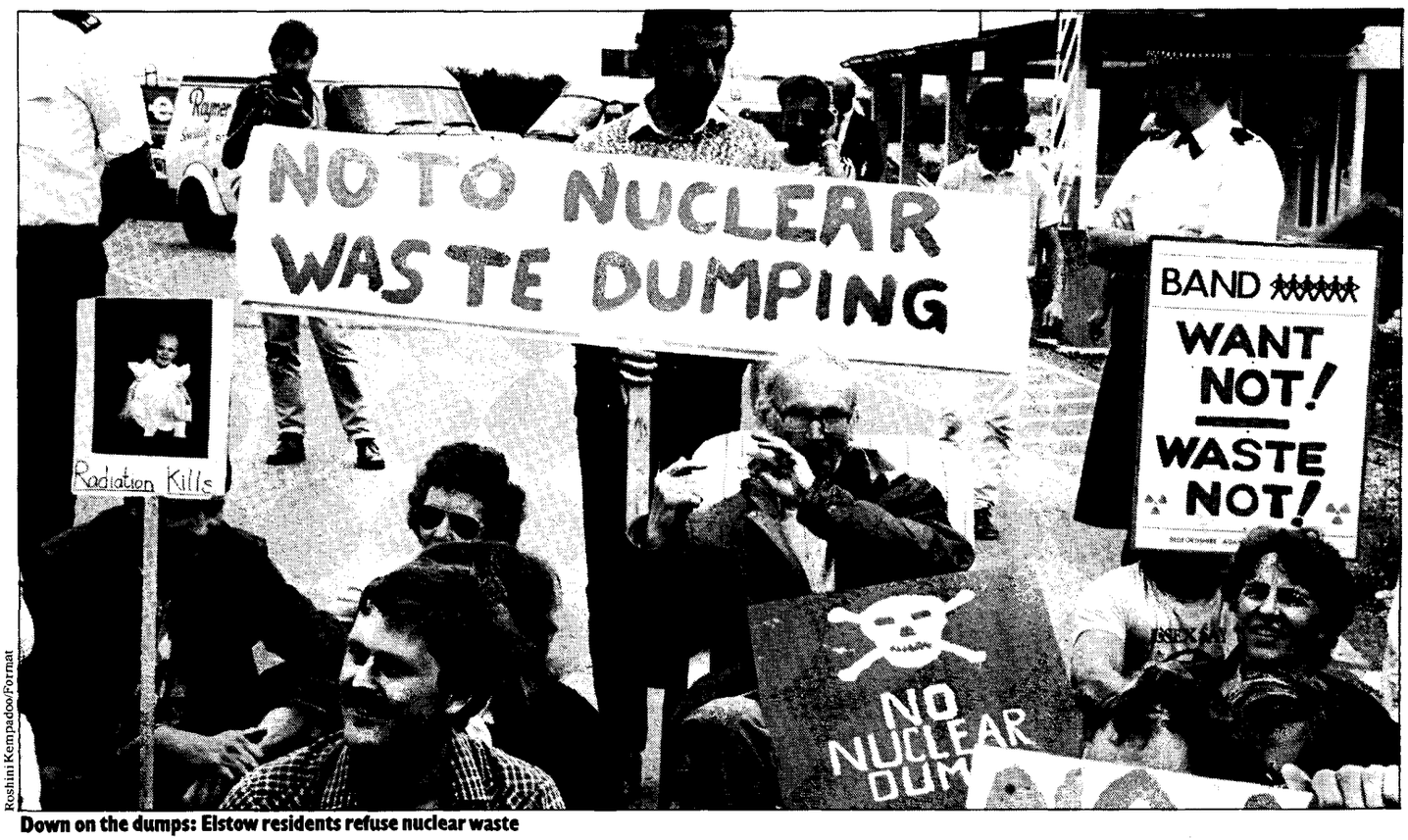
These events in themselves have a material impact on public awareness but this is politically magnified by the role of the environmental movement itself. The risks of nuclear power and of CFCs had both been raised by environmentalists for more than a decade before the recent disasters, yet had been marginalised by mainstream politics. These 'early warnings' sensitised public perception of these disasters and gave an enormous boost to green credibility. The growth of the greens cannot, however, simply be ascribed to a talent for prescience.

The green appeal embraces a positive moral and social vision in an epoch when materialism and individualism largely shape the official political agenda. This vision puts the broad themes of the quality of life and the integrity of nature centre-stage. The moral appeal remains its great strength but its expression has changed in two decades from an ineffectual moralism to an influential politics. There are three elements which have contributed to this change.

The first is the emergence of a new international environmental activism. It combines sophisticated pressure-group politics on particular issues with the espousal of a clear world view. Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace are its foremost exponents. They are constituted as international organisations; action is directed at international forums dealing with acid rain and CFCs. It is an international politics from below which stands in marked contrast to the bureaucratic nature of most international organisations. It is conspicuous as the only contemporary example of successful collaboration in the international arena.

The second has been the role of the mass media in focusing attention on these issues. This has been a vital mechanism for giving substance to issues which, while touching people deeply, are often beyond most individuals' direct experience or comprehension. The Tasmanian ecosystem and the tropical rainforests would arouse far less concern but for the passions of the two Davids: Bellamy and Attenborough. TV coverage has shifted from moral anguish to political punch. The long, pompous 'state of the planet' despair-inducing feature has given way to sharp current affairs coverage either as part of general programmes like *Panorama* or *World in Action* or series such as Michael Buerk's *Nature*. This is green politics moving from the margins to the mainstream.

The third novel feature has been the emergence of green parties and in some countries such as West Germany, actual parliamentary representation. The significance of this is twofold. On the one hand the transition from pressure group to party is about moving from indirect to direct forms of political influence. On the other hand it indicates a breadth and coherence of philosophy cap-



Roshini Kempadoo/Format

Down on the dumps: Elstow residents refuse nuclear waste

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able of sustaining the party political form. The problematic dimensions of this transition from outsider to insider politics are illustrated by the conflicts between fundamentalists and realists within the German Greens. The degree to which legitimate political compromise can be combined with a principled commitment to radical objectives is a problem of strategy for the Greens as it is for any transformatory political grouping.

Together these three elements have resulted in environmental issues forcing their way onto and profoundly reshaping the political agenda. Since the Austrian nuclear power referendum they have even become linked to the fate of governments. More commonly they have begun to figure in the routine political calculus. It was striking that in the aftermath of Chernobyl the safety standards set by different countries were in direct relation to the strength of the green movements within them. This was a tacit indicator of a new degree of political influence. Politicians of all shades have displayed an intense dislike of the pressure to debate issues publicly, which have such an unmanageable mixtures of science and emotion; yet they have had to grit their teeth and bear it.

This new status of green politics is widespread. Although originating in Western industrial nations it has spread to the East and to the developing world. Where does Britain stand in this global picture? At government level, in contrast with much of Europe, Britain is backward and primitive. At recent international forums on acid rain and toxic waste disposal, Britain has been the reluctant partner. Positive environmental regulations in the UK are now often grudging responses to EC initiatives, for example over the use of hormones in livestock farming. As for non-government activities, although the environmental groups have continued to grow apace this has not led to a broader and effective political expression. The Green Party has established a presence but does not readily command the support even of many environmental activists among whom Labour and the Democrats are equally or better represented.

This sluggishness at the political level is surely anomalous given the boom in grassroots participation in a diversity of green organisations. The absence of proportional representation is clearly an obstacle but so too is the stance of the Left. The growth of the Green Party in Germany was accompanied by a relocation of a substantial section of the Left to its ranks. In Britain the sway of labourism has proved more stifling. Although there is a growing dialogue between red and green, as shown at *Marxism Today's* Left Unlimited in 1986 and the recent Socialist Society conference, there are few signs in Britain of any significant realignment.

Along with a growing recognition of the importance of green issues there still seems to be a certain expectation by the Left that it offers a natural political home for the environmentally aware. This tends to rest on two propositions. First, that environmental damage arises from the corporate pursuit of profit and second, that the best mechanism to control such activities in the common interest is the state. There clearly is some vital shared ground here on which much can be built. Many current struggles like those over the future of the green belts are precisely about securing public regulation of business activities which destroy nature. But to leave it at this is too simple and represents an essentially complacent response to what is actually a profound challenge from green politics.

This challenge pushes at three pillars of the 20th century socialist project: modernism, internationalism and statism. All rest on deep foundations yet in practice have proved distinctly shaky.

Modernism is an ideology whose appeal is dynamic. Technological change and social progress stand against economic stagnation and cultural conservatism. But does this outlook show real concern when the consequences of change are at the expense of nature? It does not take a rural reactionary to be distressed at the loss of irreplaceable parts of our natural world. It is perfectly possible to envisage a situation within decades when the blue whale and black rhinoceros are extinct, the Mediterranean coast is completely turned to concrete, the rainforests are decimated, there is major climatic change through global warming and large areas of land are desolated by radioactivity. Yet does the ideology of modernism give this grim prospect sufficient status? There are still many whose confidence in technology and progress reassures us that such changes can be limited or adapted to. But Green politics reasserts the primacy of nature over other social objectives. This is still seen by many on the Left as hostile to the modernising impulse. Maybe a reconciliation is possible but there is no simple overlap.

Internationalism is an icon of the Left. Yet attempts to build solidarity based on working-class identity have foundered during the 20th century. The Left has found it extraordinarily difficult to come to terms with this. But the exhaustion of its own hopes should not blind the Left to the significance of a newly-emergent internationalism. The essence of green politics is that it transcends the national boundaries within whose confines nature and technology fit so uneasily. The environmental movement has begun to forge a new global politics founded on a common human interest. For the socialist movement to comprehend this and participate within it requires a renewal and redefinition of its own dormant aspirations.

Statism remains the principal view on the Left as the means to assert public purpose over private interest. Yet its confidence that the environmental interest can best be served by an extended role of the state is not shared by much of the green movement. One problem is the impossibility of direct political representation of nature itself or of future human generations who will inherit what the present generation bequeaths it. New forms of expression of such interests may be more important than increased power of the state. Otherwise the doubt must remain that an aggregate of material demands from different sections of the present population will end up outweighing the indirect needs of nature and the future. Another problem is that the complexity and uncertainty of modern industrial systems and their interaction with the natural world may exceed the capacity of any institution, however powerful and expert, to exercise effective control. It need be neither irrational nor pessimistic to suggest that humans may err and that caution may be a more important principle than misplaced courage. Yet this undoubtedly undermines the statist belief that social purpose can be effectively expressed through centralised organisation.

The green movement is opening up new ground for the future of politics. The Left could have a fruitful relationship with the process but this involves a redefinition of its own objectives as well as a contribution from its traditions and experience. Such an outlook could have a significant effect on the direction in which these new openings lead. ●

Green Turns: Environmental Consciousness Raisers

1945: First use of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima, Japan.
1952: First anti-nuclear demonstration at Aldermaston.
1954: Nuclear test in the Bikini Atoll.
1957: Fire in the plutonium pile at Windscale.
1963: Publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring,* with a major impact on public awareness of the dangers of pesticides.
1965: The BBC bans *The War Game,* a film about the aftermath of a nuclear war.
1967: Torrey Canyon oil tanker spill.
1968: First colour photographs of earth from lunar orbit taken by the crew of Apollo 8.
1972: International Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment; Friends of the Earth established.
1973: The People Movement established; *Limits to Growth* published.
1975: The People Movement becomes the Ecology Party.
1976: Release of the poisonous gas dioxin in Seveso, Italy.
1979: Nuclear meltdown at Three Mile Island, USA.
1981: First Green MPs in Europe elected in Belgium.
1983: First Green Party MPs elected to the West German *Bundestag;* Windscale nuclear plant renamed Sellafield.
1984: Gas leak from Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, India.
1985: Greenpeace ship *Rainbow Warrior* sunk by French agents in New Zealand; Ecology Party becomes Green Party; British government agrees to permanent ban on nuclear dumping at sea.
1986: Meltdown and fallout from Chernobyl nuclear plant, Ukraine; lead-free petrol available in Britain; Rhine pollution disaster after fire at Sandoz plant in Switzerland.
1987: Release of official documents concerning 1957 Windscale accident; Layfield Report gives Sizewell nuclear plant the go-ahead; Montreal protocol of the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer signed by 25 countries.

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Hothouse Planet

Some scientists are predicting global chaos, flooding and famine as a result of changes in the earth's climate. Jean Palutikof discusses the possible implications of the greenhouse effect and assesses some of the ways the problem might be solved

Recent reports of the severe drought in the Midwest of the US have led to sensational media reports of impending global chaos. This unusual interest has been aroused by the possible connection between this event and the greenhouse effect, the warming of the atmosphere resulting from increasing concentrations of gases such as carbon dioxide. Scientists have speculated about this connection for many years, and even as the newspapers were reporting on the Midwest drought an international conference was being held in Toronto to debate the effects of chemical changes in the atmosphere.

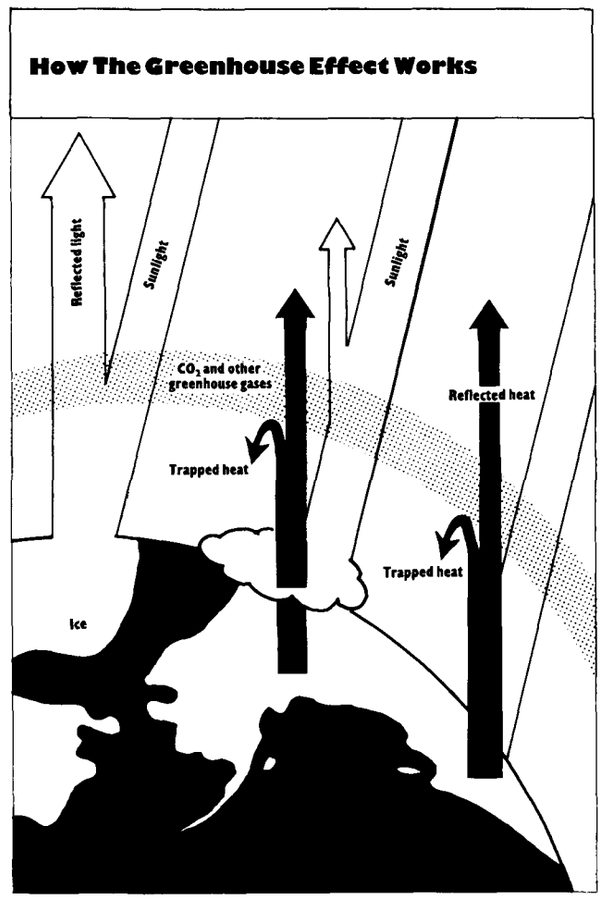
The last 12 months have been remarkable in the greenhouse debate. There has been a marked shift in the scientific consensus. It is now generally assumed that, unless preventative measures are taken, we are embarking on a global experiment which may change our climate in ways we cannot predict or control.

Living on the earth's surface, humanity is protected from the sun's rays by the deep overlying blanket of air. The density of the air diminishes very gradually with height. Some 80% of the atmospheric mass lies in the troposphere, that zone immediately adjacent to the earth's surface in which temperature decreases with height. The top of the troposphere is at an altitude of around 10 kilometres over the poles, 15 kilometres above the Equator. As the sun's rays pass through the overlying stratosphere and the troposphere beneath, the radiation is absorbed, scattered and reflected until at the surface only 54% of the radiation incident at the top of the atmosphere remains. The earth-atmosphere system itself radiates energy back into space and in order for a balance to be maintained, the amount of incoming radiation must equal the outgoing amount over a long period of time such as a year.

The amount of radiation emitted, and its wavelength, are related to the temperature of the radiating body. The sun, with a temperature of over 5000°C, radiates very large amounts of energy at short wavelengths. The much cooler earth-atmosphere systems emits smaller amounts of radiation at longer wavelengths. This difference in emitted wavelengths is critical to an understanding of the greenhouse effect. The gases which are principally responsible for absorption of radiation in the atmosphere are water vapour, carbon dioxide and, to a lesser extent, ozone. These gases do not absorb uniformly over the whole spectrum but selectively at certain spectral bands, particularly at the longer wavelengths.

What is the result of increasing the tropospheric concentration of a gas which selectively absorbs long wave radiation but is transparent to short wave radiation arriving from the sun? We still receive the same amount of energy from the sun. However, the proportion of the long wave radiation outgoing from the earth's surface which is absorbed in the lower troposphere by the greenhouse gases increases? This causes the temperature of the lower troposphere to rise, leading in turn to an increase in the amount of energy emitted. Eventually a new balance between absorbed and emitted radiation will be achieved, at a higher temperature. This, in brief, is the 'greenhouse effect'.

The atmospheric concentrations of certain greenhouse gases are increasing because of human activity. Perhaps the best known of these gases is carbon dioxide (CO_2). The developed world is responsible for the bulk of emissions. Prior to the industrial revolution the atmospheric concentration of CO_2 was probably around 290 parts per million by volume (ppmv). The present-day value is around 345ppmv, an increase of about 20%, and the scientific consensus is that concentrations will double to about 580ppmv around the middle of next century. The principal contributions of human origin are from fossil fuel-burning in industrial processes, car engines and energy production, and from the chemical reactions involved in cement-making. These processes currently inject some 5.5 billion tonnes of CO_2 into the atmosphere each year. The distribution of countries responsible for these emissions reflects changes in the pattern of industrialisation. In 1950, North America and western Europe together produced over 68% of all CO_2, but by 1980 this figure had dropped to 43% of a greatly expanded total. Over the same period the fraction attributable to the developing countries of the South grew from 7% to over 20% as these countries aspired to the industrialised example set for them by the North. Deforestation and changes in land use are also important sources of CO_2 releases caused by human activity, although their precise contribution is much more difficult to estimate.



Excess CO_2 at present contributes around 55% of the enhanced greenhouse effect. Methane and nitrous oxide, from high intensity agriculture, and the chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs): synthetic gases used as aerosol propellants and refrigerants, are also greenhouse gases which are increasing in concentration.

Scientists now generally agree on the principal climatic effects which a doubling in the concentration of the greenhouse gases would bring. Global temperatures are expected to increase by between 1.5 – 4.5°C but at the poles the increase should be up to 8°C near the North Pole. These globally-averaged changes are of the same scale as those which have occurred since the Ice Age. Rainfall is expected to increase worldwide. The largest increases would be experienced in mid-latitudes whereas in the tropics and subtropics decline is predicted. We cannot expect that changes will occur in a gradual fashion. Rather, we should expect a rapid 'flip-over' from one state to another, just as the transition between winter and summer is often abrupt. Beyond these generalisations there is no consensus that would help us to assess the economic, social and political implications. All that can be said is that the regional effects are expected to be severe.

Given the inadequacy of the predictions, what can we say about the impacts of the greenhouse effect? The most significant feature must surely be the uncertainty: we know almost nothing about where the climate changes will occur, their character or their severity.

The principal effects will be on agriculture. The grain-producing areas of the world, may be supplanted by new areas favoured by the thermal regimes of a higher greenhouse gas world. We cannot say precisely where these new areas may be, or when these changes might occur. With the demise of the old climatically-favoured areas may go the political influence wielded by countries with grain surpluses to trade in the international market place. Large population movements towards the new fertile areas and across international frontiers, with all the tensions that this implies, may occur. These effects will be compounded by rising sea levels caused by melting ice and thermal expansion of sea water.

Although there is a tendency in the media to present only the negative aspects of the greenhouse effect, there is no doubt that some areas will gain from more favourable climate regimes. If the predictions are correct, these areas will be in

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the wetter mid-latitudes: the Mediterranean basin and Mongolia. Furthermore, increased CO_2 concentrations in laboratory conditions have been shown to have a direct physiological effect on plants, increasing yields and decreasing the water requirement. It is possible that these beneficial effects will persist in field-grown crops.

The final question concerns future emissions of the greenhouse gases. We are beginning to accept that, by changing the chemical composition of the atmosphere, we will fundamentally alter our environment. If we wanted to, could we reverse this trend? The problem is not as simple as it might superficially appear. There is a lag between the increasing atmospheric concentrations of the greenhouse gases and the response of the climate system. Even if an unprecedented level of global co-operation could halt emissions tomorrow, the atmosphere would continue to warm for decades before it reached a new equilibrium.

The most positive action humanity could take would be to modify patterns of energy consumption. The burden of responsibility for such modifications must lie with the developed world which must lead by example, turning away from the fossil fuels and towards renewable sources. Nuclear power plants do not emit greenhouse gases, but the other environmental problems they create prevent their consideration as a viable alternative. Based on current levels of technology, wind energy could provide 20% of the power requirement of the UK at costs equivalent to those from conventional sources. Since it is estimated that the Central Electricity Generating Board is responsible for about 1% of the global production of CO_2, this represents a considerable reduction in emissions. Coupled with a programme of conservation, the opportunities for reducing emissions in the energy sector are encouraging.

Possible actions to moderate the greenhouse effect can have little if any effect in the short term. National governments are seldom enthusiastic about implementing expensive measures, the benefits of which may not be felt for more than a generation. It appears inevitable, then, that the greenhouse effect will lead to severe environmental impacts. There is little doubt that, if we knew precisely what to expect, and if the rate of change was slow, humanity has the ingenuity to adapt without undue suffering. However, we have no precise idea of what lies ahead, except that the changes will arrive abruptly, and without warning. ●

TROUBLED EARTH

Tropical Trauma

The destruction of the tropical rainforests contributes to the imbalance of the ecosystem. Mick Kelly and Sarah Granich explain the link between Third World debt and international ecological problems

Carlos Reyes/Andes Press Agency

Debt and destruction: Slash and burn deforestation in Panama

Deforestation and changing land use have been major contributors to the greenhouse problem. The continuing destruction of the tropical forests remains a significant source of CO_2 emissions. Preventing further environmental degradation requires that specific consideration be given to the Third World. Here the impact of greenhouse warming will compound their myriad environmental, social and economic difficulties.

The primary cause of deforestation is the exploitative relationship between the industrialised world and the South. A major resource is being destroyed to meet the demands of the industrialised world.

An area of tropical forest the size of the UK is vanishing every year. This vital ecosystem may well cease to exist within the next 50 years. A unique range of services will be lost, including regulation of the composition of the atmosphere, amelioration of the local climate, recycling of nutrients and the maintenance of a genetic reservoir of unparalleled diversity. Tropical forests can give life to over 100 species of animals in less than 2.5 acres while deforestation condemns at least one species to extinction every day. Over a third of all medicines have their origin in the rainforest yet by the year 2000, over 2000 plants with anti-cancer properties will have been lost.

Once plant life is removed, a minimal soil quality is left for farming. Rather than filtering through the forest canopy, the rainwater rushes down the bared earth snatching the topsoil, flooding streams and rivers with silt and debris. The supply of moisture-laden air to surrounding areas is restricted with water lost through run-off and the energy balance is disturbed with cloud cover reduced and natural vegetation replaced. The inevitable result is climatic disruption.

Forests feed the air we breathe, absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen. As trees burn or decay, excess carbon dioxide pollutes the atmosphere and the greenhouse effect is enhanced. The denuded soil left by forests stripped for agriculture necessitates massive amounts of fertilizer from which nitrous oxide, another greenhouse gas, is generated. Even then, the soil will only be productive for a mere four or five years.

Why does deforestation occur? Many environmental problems are caused by grandiose development schemes favoured by Western experts, which often lead to extensive loss of forest. The building of the Tucurul dam in Brazil resulted in the destruction of 800 square miles of rainforest. Cattle ranching, cash crops and logging for export spurred on by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are other causes.

The debt of Third World nations has its root in the actions of those civilised institutions which have, over the centuries, plundered their resources. Is it possible to preserve the rainforest while combating the poverty level of subsistence in the Third World? A number of plans for action, have been developed in recognition of the crisis.

In June 1987, *The Ecologist* advanced a four-point programme, calling for the reformation of development strategy, a halt to ill-advised development projects, rehabilitation of the biosphere and an end to the travesty of Third World debt.

The World Wildlife Fund and the Costa Rican government have recently arranged to set aside a large area of forest as a national park. Conservation International negotiated $650,000 worth of Bolivia's debt at a discounted rate of $100,000 in exchange for the conservation of 3.7m acres of forest. 'Debt for nature' schemes such as these are now being improvised by environmental groups but there has been no concerted effort on the part of international institutions. Local peoples can be assisted to develop skills and resources which limit environmental degradation. But grassroots schemes do not have the fatal attraction of the sponsorship of a largescale project.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), is, potentially, a powerful organisation. Although hindered by the complacent attitude of many member governments, UNEP has launched a series of initiatives to limit environmental degradation. It could play a major role in facilitating forms of reparation and assistance. Whether or not the 'greening' of the World Bank augurs a more thoughtful approach to development funding is as yet unclear. A substantial change in the values of the IMF, given its focus on exports whatever the social and environmental cost, is essential.

Faced with increasing population, endemic poverty, environmental disintegration, short-sighted development schemes and the exploitation of what natural resources remain, the Third World is already ill-equipped to weather the crises of coming decades. As the greenhouse effect imposes further stress. If this catastrophe is to be averted, debts must be written off, fair trade instituted, subsidies arranged, and expertise shared. Given the past exploitation of the Third World, this should not be treated as aid, it is rather a question of reparation. ●

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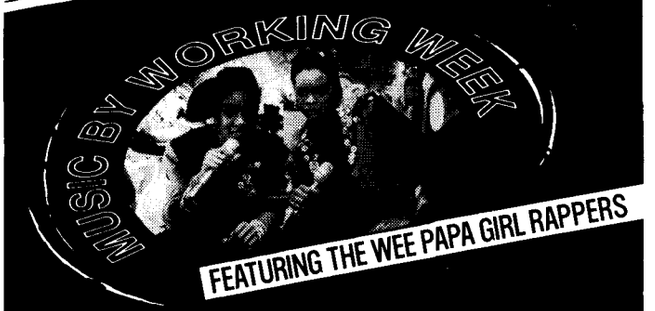

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Channel Visions

A Roundtable Discussion

Television is in turmoil: pushed and pulled by politicians, new technology and changing viewing and commercial demands. The broadcasters sketch out the future

The participants in the roundtable are: David Elstein, Director of Programmes at Thames TV; Claire Enders, former Marketing Director of Super Channel and now freelance consultant; Nicholas Fraser from Panoptic Productions independent production company and Alan Yentob, Controller of BBC 2. The discussion was chaired by Raymond Snoddy, media correspondent for the *Financial Times*

Ray: 'The government is very keen on the idea of subscription'

I'd like to begin with the idea of public service broadcasting. Are we at a turning point in the type of broadcasting which we have had now for 30-odd years? Is it the end of an era?

Alan I'll start off if you like, given that the BBC is, in one way or another, at the centre of what we call public service broadcasting. Although I think the notion has undergone change since the advent of ITV anyway, so public service broadcasting is, if you like, a shared ideology of quality broadcasting.

Of course there's going to be change now, and the question is, how far we want the same values to remain at the centre of broadcasting in this country? Because I don't think they will be sustained simply by sitting still.

Where are the pressures coming from that are driving this change?

David They're mostly political pressures, with some commercial ones. Until the mid-70s broadcasting was a comfortable duopoly, with little external political pressure, where the licence fee had not been ravaged by inflation, and where the transfer from black and white to colour licences was providing a financial cushion for the BBC. ITV meanwhile had 55% of the audience, happy advertisers, and if anything, was moving more and more towards 'quality' programming: *Brideshead, Jewel In The Crown*... As that virtuous cycle of transfer to colour tv licences – the painless way of increasing income – flattened out, the BBC found itself hit by inflation and by a terrifically intense political glare, demanding value for money and accountability. That's more or less ended now. The BBC looks as if it's in safe hands – an accountant's hands – where there is a determination never to ask for more than inflation-linked increases in the licence fee.

So now ITV has come under an intense political glare. The economic forces being unleashed on ITV are for the most part good. The requirement to allow independent access: extraordinarily healthy. The demolition of restrictive practices by a sledgehammer: extraordinarily healthy. The need to compete for viewers – very good for us: we'd forgotten what it was like to compete for viewers! The manipulation of the financial arrangements in ITV: very *unhealthy*, because ITV doesn't know where it is, and every week the scenario changes. Is Channel 4 in or out of the ITV system? Is there going to be Channel 5? Are there going to be two or four satellite channels in the sky? When is Astra going up?

Claire I'm in complete agreement with those who support public service broadcasting. I'm an American who grew up in Europe, and I came to this country seven years ago. I'd always assumed that commercial broadcasting was a good thing: much more efficient, and better for the viewer. The changes in the last 10 years have been good in one respect: the viewer has returned to the forefront of the broadcasters' consciousness. It doesn't even take *real* competition for this to occur – just the threat of competition is good enough for people to start to say: 'We're going to organise ourselves a bit more like a fast-moving consumer-goods manufacturer: we're going to think about our customer'. That's really very good.

Alan Well it can be. It wasn't so good in America when there were just three tv networks.

Claire In America people consume so much more tv that it's very hard to draw any lessons. I'm much more interested in what's happened in Italy and France, to see what might happen in the UK in five or 10 years' time. And this tells me that public service broadcasting is on the wane and will not survive in the long run, unless it is incredibly carefully legislated for, as it *is* in France, but is *not* in Italy. I support very clear distinctions between public service and free commercial broadcasting, and I don't believe the BBC should be engaged in the kind of commercial broadcasting which it in effect is involved in, a race for viewers in order to justify the licence fee.

Alan I don't think the BBC is engaged in that. It's in a race to make itself economically viable; and I don't think the increase in the BBC's competitiveness has been as extreme as you're talking about. The afternoon soap is one thing, but there's still a very large proportion of documentary and factual material on BBC 1 as well.

What about the increasing number of independent tv programme-makers? Do they care about how many public service channels there are?

Nicholas Well, I think the independents want as much public service broadcasting on the air as possible, because most of them come out of the Channel 4 culture and they're used to making programmes in that context. The problem is that public service broadcasting grew up in this country as a consequence of monopoly, so you're actually talking about a system and not a set of programmes. Debate about the future has to get away from the notion that we're all defending the old monopoly with its so-called humanising regulations – that has gone already. In the long term we need to think about structures for getting money into programme-making.

Can I ask you about two specific programme decisions already made by London Weekend Television? *Weekend World* has been killed off, widely regarded as the most analytical and most serious of the current affairs programmes. At the complete opposite end of the scale, there was the decision that wrestling should no longer be a part of ITV. Here is a minority sport that appeals on the whole to the elderly, the working class, the unemployed; and here is a system – still calling itself public service broadcasting – quite happily saying: 'These are not the people we want to serve any more, because they do not actually bring in the advertisers'.

David You are misreading the signs! London Weekend is on record as saying the days of public service broadcasting for ITV companies are numbered; there won't be any peaktime current affairs, and maybe no peaktime factual programmes on ITV within two years if we're in a fully-commercial environment. They just can't survive.

But let me look at the two things you asked about. *Weekend World* will be replaced by a religious magazine programme before Sunday lunch and the current peaktime religious programme will be replaced by an hour-long current affairs programme. So the net outcome on Sunday will be an *increase* in the amount of factual programming.

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Will it be the same sort of programme as *Weekend World*?

David Oh no, it'll be a much more popular accessible current affairs show. But you might say that ITV is overloaded with a particular type of current affairs programme: highly serious, highly analytical and investigative, such as *World In Action*, *This Week* and *Weekend World*. I think that is a problem because so much of the same kind of factual programming on ITV means that there's less of other kinds. And the more we enter in to the commercial era the more of a limitation that will be seen to be.

The reason for dropping wrestling is twofold. It's been on ITV for 30 years and it has declining audiences. It's marginal, barely a sport at all.

But hasn't London Weekend also more or less admitted that the audiences are less 'interesting' in their terms?

David Oh well, that's a way of saying to advertisers that we are aware that the ITV audience is heavily down-market and over-55, and that there are other audiences that we must appeal to in our own long-term interests. We do have to start putting on programmes that appeal more to younger audiences and more ABC1. There's nothing magical about BBC programmes to make their audience profile closer to the actual population than ITV's. The reason why ITV's audience profile is so down-market is that people who are poor or unemployed or elderly spend more time watching tv. People who are rich and young go out and spend money in night-clubs.

Claire But doesn't this assume that everybody's chasing the same audience?

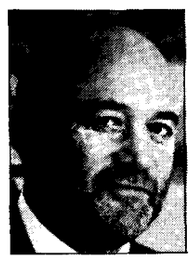
I think it's very paradoxical that British Satellite Broadcasting (BSB) has defined its programming plans to chase the audience that you're trying to leave behind!

Alan A lot of their targeted viewers of course are watching tv in the afternoon. Certainly there are rather more elderly people than there were. I get a huge number of letters asking why the elderly are not specifically catered for like the so-called youth audience.

David There are a number of paradoxes here, which are at the heart of public service broadcasting. For instance, we are required to make pre-schools programmes on ITV. In the old days of course, when ITV was the only thing on the air in the daytime, that was OK. But this particular minority audience – mothers at home with children under the age of five – is 7% of the available daytime audience now. Why are we required to address that 7%? As soon as we put pre-schools programmes on our ratings disappear.

What you've been required to do until now is to make a diversity of programmes that address some of the audience all of the time, even though it might not be in your immediate commercial interest to do so. Are we now looking at a possibility in the forthcoming white paper on the future of tv, that these requirements will no longer be there? And as a consequence people end up paying more for less real choice.

Claire: 'Because of the high fixed costs of satellite, there is very little to spend on programming'



Nicholas: 'This government sees public service broadcasting as a very powerful source of counter-culture'

Nicholas It seems to me that the most important thing in the context of regulation in the white paper will be whether serious stuff is to be left to the BBC, which would give us tv a bit like in the 50s actually; or whether the government will legislate to provide public service broadcasting on ITV and Channel 4.

David Let's get the thing in perspective. The BBC will always provide – as long as it's allowed the licence fee – a substantial amount of public service. Although my personal definition wouldn't include *Neighbours* twice a day! And the situation is likely to remain similar for Channel 4 as long as it is protected financially.

Alan Did you come into broadcasting, David, to work in an entirely commercial system?

David No. It will be devastating for me if ITV is reduced to merely being a commercial channel: that will be awful. And I wouldn't stay. I think it will be a hard battle to keep the elements of quality within ITV. The way we will find a compromise in this new commercial world is by emphasising high-quality domestic British products, but it will be in a narrower range than hitherto. Our drama will not be as adventurous as it used to be, we will have to play safer: our factual programming will be more populist and less esoteric, and it will be a less interesting place to work. And it might get worse than that.

Claire But is it that interesting now? The trouble with ITV is that it's just so uncreative compared to Channel 4 or to the BBC. There is very little that is sparkling – and that is where the independents have to come in. In many ways it will be good for ITV to have a change of skin because it's clapped out quite frankly.

David Well, don't look to the independents for that! I've sifted through 500 submissions from independent producers and commissioned one entertainment programme – one! They're mostly factual programmes; documentary series, single documentaries etc.

Nicholas Two reasons for that: firstly, because that was what Jeremy Isaacs was interested in at Channel 4, that's what he created. There was very little light entertainment on Channel 4. Secondly, we're so under-capitalised, all of us – such small companies – that we have terrible trouble diversifying. Drama entails huge development costs.

Alan But there's a different ecology working at the moment. It is slightly distressing that there's a kind of guerrilla group of talent which is moving around and selling similar products all over the place.

This 'guerrilla band' are of course at present trying to sell their wares in large blocks to BSB and in a different way Rupert Murdoch is buying as fast as he can stuff off the shelf. What effect is all that going to have on your channels?

David Well I think it will be difficult if programme-makers move around all the sectors too much. Because the danger is that you start making programmes in order to accommodate the marketplace, rather than because you have a brief and an idea.

Claire The fact is that any independent who had some sense would not go in for major commissions from BSB or from Rupert Murdoch or whoever. There's no money in it. I've been through this, year in year out at Super Channel. You're buying programmes off the shelf as fast as you can for as little as possible: it's like buying tv by the yard. Because of the very high fixed costs of distribution via satellite there is very little money to spend on programming.

Alan If viewing habits have meant anything in this country then I think that people are still going to want quality tv, and if it is available I would have thought that the appetite for quality programmes will be sustained. There's also the matter of access. Over the next 10 or 15 years it's going to be a few percent of people who will want and have access to the new channels. So it seems to me that it's essential not to give way over the next five or 10 years and to make sure that standards are maintained.

David I think there are two impacts which we have to be aware of. The first is segmentation: that is, the specialist channels which will slice off bits of audience – film channels, children's channels, youth channels etc. I think that the main networks will retain by far the largest proportion of the audience, but interestingly, as bits of the audience split off, we may do what American networks have done, which is go for the old and the middle-aged. There isn't a single peaktime show on US network tv which is designed for the young.

The second danger is that BSB is very different from low-budget Super Channel-type, Sky Channel and Murdoch-type shows. BSB has a very large programme and advertising budget; £600m is an awful lot of money to have in the marketplace.

Claire They won't last on that level though. But on your first point, David, the fact is that in talking of this massive fragmentation of audiences, you assume that there will be a mass market for direct broadcast satellite (DBS) in this country. If that is not the case, then the fragmentation of audience will not occur, for the very simple reason that the UK is a very small marketplace by comparison with the US. Even if such a mass market were established, viewing would still be centred on the existing channels. For instance, in the US the three main channels still get about 70-75% of the

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What's In A Dish

By 1990 UK telly addicts will have two new sources for their evening fix. Later this year the Astra satellite, owned and operated by a consortium of Luxemburg banks, goes into orbit over central Africa. The second source, a satellite owned by a UK venture called British Satellite Broadcasting (BSB), is due to arrive 36,000 kilometres above Brazil by Christmas 1989.

Until now satellite broadcasts have acted largely as an adjunct to conventional terrestrial transmission services. Live pictures have been bounced around the globe by satellite, and then into viewers' homes through their normal broadcast services, like the BBC. Astra and BSB are different, because for the first time the pictures they send will arrive in the home straight from space, by direct broadcast satellite (DBS).

DBS is a prime example of the modern trend to cracking trivial problems with technological sledgehammers. The quest for more game shows has led companies like BSB to invest £700m in, literally, just getting its business off the ground. For that sum, BSB is getting a terrestrial 'up-put' station able to send very high frequency (18 GHz) radio signals to a tiny, but very expensive, cannister packed with electronics, and placed in a geostationary orbit about 36,000 kilometres up.

The BSB satellite will broadcast to a 'footprint' roughly 1,000 kilometres across, covering the north coast of France and reaching to the northern isles off Scotland. The Astra satellite will have a larger footprint, covering much of western Europe.

Ordinary tv aerials can't cope with high frequency satellite signals. So viewers will need dishes, pointed very precisely in the direction of the source.

BSB claims that because its satellite is more powerful than Astra, viewers will need a dish no more than 12″ wide. Proponents of the Astra satellite claim their viewers will need a 22″ dish. Not everyone agrees. In particular, viewers in the north of England and Scotland will be close to the edge of Astra's footprint, and may need dishes almost a metre wide. Size is important: the high frequency signals used by satellites cannot penetrate physical obstructions such as buildings, or even trees. A tv dish in the loft is out, and you may not want a metre-wide metal soup plate cluttering up the garden or hanging off the wall of your house. And to receive both Astra and BSB, a viewer must buy two dishes, or one very clever one motorised to retarget itself remotely: perhaps over £1,000-worth.

Astra and BSB services also use different transmission signal formats which are mutually exclusive. Rupert Murdoch's proposed services on Astra will use a format called PAL. This is the same format used by all European tv broadcasters, and once received by the dish, the signal doesn't need to be converted before it is piped into the back of the tv set. The disadvantage of PAL is that it is already 30 years old, still has problems with some combinations of colour (weathermen in check sports jackets can look pretty odd on PAL), and it may not be around for much longer.

MAC, on the other hand is the latest thing in tv format standards, and has been chosen for use by BSB. MAC gives better, cleaner signals than PAL; can cope with more than one sound channel (so broadcasts can be multi-lingual with the viewer picking the language they want); and importantly allows the encryption of signals. This means BSB programmes can be sold on a subscription-only basis. The signal is in code, and decipherable only to those viewers who pay to see it.

The disadvantage of MAC is that it is likely to make receiving equipment more expensive. Also, although picture quality is potentially much better than with PAL you won't notice the difference with a normal tv set unless you also have a special convertor.

A golden rule of technological change is that it is ultimately governed by commercial, and not technological, interests. Another is that technological change is never final, and already some pundits believe satellite tv may be a stop-gap technology. Changes in the regulations covering telephone services, and the emergence of things like fibre-optic technology are beginning to blur the distinctions between different communications technologies and services.

By the end of the next decade what we now call the telephone may have turned into a single integrated terminal, delivering voice, data and video services to the home from a single wall-socket. The economies of scale open to this kind of operation are going to make satellite systems look very expensive indeed. ●

Phil Jones

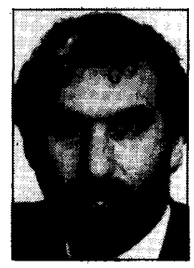
audience. And another thing: the Europeans are very active and very selective viewers by comparison with the US and Japan. They may not subscribe to paid-for specialist channels in large enough numbers, because they use their video recorders to satisfy specialist interests already.

David In a wonderfully ironic way, the broadcasters' biggest insurance policy may turn out to be the fact that surplus demand for viewing is being absorbed by cheap video-recording off the tv, which will cut into potential subscription revenue.

Claire So in fact the satellite broadcasting will have very little impact on your real audiences and on your real revenues, even over a 10-year period.

David But it *might* have, and because it might have a real impact, we're going to have to reduce the quality end of our scheduling.

Claire This is very interesting. We



Alan: 'The BBC is engaged in a race to make itself economically viable'

are agreeing that there isn't going to be much chance of real competition but even so ITV is acting as though it was around the corner, and so it is actually defrauding all the viewers of many years of public service broadcasting in advance.

David It's that debate which is going on inside ITV at the moment: do we wait and see what the competition is like and then adjust, or do we adjust now because by then it may be too late?

Alan But David, if you, as someone who believes in and has always made quality programmes, are prepared to swallow this argument and give up the battle this early, what of the others? You have a responsibility to your viewers, your shareholders and your broadcasters. Is it cynicism which takes you this route, or are you saying these are practical matters and there is nothing else to do?

David Part of the pressure for more competition has come from advertisers who believe that ITV is not delivering sufficient commercial airtime, and that new commercial channels, Channel 5, satellite and so on, will provide more. My view is that they won't – they will simply fragment the existing commercial tv audience. What follows is that the advertisers will get more and more agonised as they see the audience not enlarged, the commercial channels fragmented – each of them with less money to spend on programming – and the quality of programming therefore descending. So you have to try and pre-empt that argument by saying that the one thing ITV will not allow, even in the new competitive age, is for its audience share to collapse any further.

The government is very keen on the idea of subscription. In view of that, do you think the idea of 'universality' – the long-held theory that you spend very large sums of money to make four national channels available to almost everyone in the country – can survive? Or for example, will the BBC countenance charging a subscription for watching BBC 2?

Alan I don't think the BBC will countenance it for a minute, nor do I think it is practicable. Do you know what BBC 2 currently costs the licence-payer? £11 per household per year. It's a staggeringly low price and it's available to everyone. Of course the removal of BBC 2 and Channel 4 from the frequency spectrum would leave more space for more channels, but they won't be available to everyone. Access would be limited to, say, 70% of the national audience. Anyway, there's already room on the spectrum for two more national channels, new Channels 5 and 6, and that is surely enough expansion if satellite, cable and video are to have any chance of success.

But there is a philosophical idea here which does attract the government: they don't like the idea that, either through advertising or raising a fee, you get everything at an undifferentiated price. It's not consumer choice. They *do* like the idea that the consumer has the right and the ability to choose to purchase an individual product. If they can find a way to do that they will.

Alan The fact is that these other methods of raising income don't allow support for the tv system, delivering new programmes, in the way that at its best the BBC does. The crux of it is that the BBC is also a huge, powerful production house.

Nicholas But what we haven't recognised in this debate, I think, is the hostility of this government towards public service broadcasting. We all know that the government is split over broadcasting policy, but I think Mrs Thatcher wished the Peacock report had come up with a prescription for destroying the BBC. The reason this government dislikes public service broadcasting is that it sees it as a very powerful source of counter-culture in

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Britain to Thatcherite values. Now I'm not a socialist, but I think the counter-culture should survive, and I think it should be beefed up by whatever methods possible. The problem is that this government doesn't think that and I anticipate that there will be almost a conscious intent in this white paper to erode or destroy the concept of public service broadcasting. I hope it's not going to happen and that we don't waste the next 10 years trying to reinstitute the system by other means, but I do think the BBC is key: if it is held together in the white paper, then it will be much easier for Channel 4 and ITV.

David I think Nick has got the key point here: this is a government which above all dislikes broadcasters who put out programmes which are inconvenient.

They don't like *Death On The Rock*, they don't like *Secret Society*, and that's what they define as the 'irresponsible' broadcasters, the unnacceptable face of public service broadcasting. Fortunately, I don't think they can win that public argument.

Alan I suspect actually that the government never watched tv until the video recorder arrived, and then all the evil little moments on tv could be picked up and re-run over and over!

Claire But it's clear that the government, after spending however much public money on all these studies, hasn't got a clue. It is very worrying that there are these people in government in charge of policy who clearly do not understand broadcasting. They have a lot of crazy ideas, which they are perfectly capable, because of the way your system works here in Britain, of shoving down everybody's throats, of changing our future really very fundamentally. How the government can act as if the advertisers are a more important constituency than the viewer strikes me as amazing.

David: 'I think it will be a hard battle to keep the elements of quality within ITV'

As I'm certain Margaret Thatcher reads *MT*, what one suggestion do each of you have to make to her on the new broadcasting legislation for the 1990s?

Alan I would say, while we are looking to see what this brave new world is going to bring, let's maintain at least that which is good in the system. The other thing I would just warn about, is the obvious contradiction in terms: if you're going to allow all this change and you suddenly create a Broadcasting Standards Council which is going to regulate everything out of existence, then you're not actually going to get anything very different out of broadcasting.

Claire Well I would advise government to press ahead with Channel 5, and make Channel 4 self-financing, but I'd have no objection to very specific caveats to have public service broadcasting content on all those channels. And I would add that it would be nice if the government understood that this debate, which is *cultural* as well as industrial, has not been debated in those terms: as a matter of public policy rather than as an industrial issue. That it has become an industrial issue is a terrible mistake.

David Margaret Thatcher has done tv a lot of good, she's brought economic rationality to the system, and much of it has been achieved without a line of legislation, just by bullying and strong-arming a reluctant duopoly into shape. But the next step, as Claire says, must be that the government has to act in the public interest in terms of structuring broadcasting. Economic rationality must be there, but don't legislate for the sake of advertisers, don't legislate for the sake of ITV shareholders; legislate in the public interest.

Nicholas My wish is that Mrs Thatcher should rediscover that there is such a thing as the public interest. I think this phase of Thatcherism excludes those sorts of terms. She should also acknowledge that there's nothing wrong with the concept of a regulated market, that tv has always been regulated, and because there is a certain amount of scarcity, both of airtime and of programmes available to be shown, it's a contradiction to talk of deregulation in tv. You either have good regulation or bad regulation. Also she should rethink the whole concept of regulation to be an enabling one, rather than to prevent things from happening, which is what, on the whole, we have had for the past decades.●

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Skirts And Flirts

Forget the New Man, meet the New Woman. But, asks Lucy O'Brien, who exactly is she?

Oh my. The Post-Feminist Woman (PFW) has arrived. Or so the *Mail On Sunday* gleefully told us in May. The PFW is a 'new class in society', selecting the most attractive tenets of feminism to get on, get ahead, and achieve success with a great deal more style and panache than the average man. Not only that but she looks feminine too! She dresses up in Nicole Farhi suits, chiffon, stilettos and Gaultier broderie anglaise bras. She uses her 'traditional' feminine wiles to flirt with male employers and manipulate a successful career. Perfect. We don't have to worry anymore.

A quick spot-check last week proved frustrating, however. Plenty of women with pushchairs and M&S cardigans, plenty wearing Doc Marten shoes, jeans and flying jackets, hardly a shoulder pad, filofax or Donna Karan tiered skirt in sight. An observation that emphasises how *rare* this new breed must be. Outside the coutured confines of private PR companies and the media square mile exists a less glamorous, practical regiment of women leading 'normal' lives.

The *Mail On Sunday*'s triumphant supplement on PFW, along with the more analytical coverage in 'qualities' like *The Independent* ('The Sweet Kick Of Success'), and *The Sunday Times* ('Who Is Today's New Woman?), point to several trends in the image-making of late-1980s woman.

With the rise of Thatcherite economics, women have made gains in professional or managerial work, gradually competing, and sometimes succeeding, in male dominated areas. The *Mail On Sunday* has creamed off the most eye-catching indications of this trend. Whoopee for the post-feminist Thatcherite.

Simultaneously, however, there are more and more women entering part-time low skilled manual employment, an expansion of inequality that keeps women's average hourly earnings at 70% of men's. With the cut in maternity benefits, the increase of single parent families, and the fact that two out of three homeless people are female, the idea of a PFW is at best misleading, at worst, glossy propaganda.

Post-feminist woman is adspeak for the 80s, a category in an entire selection of off-the-peg consumer lifestyles. We have 'the young', catered for by exhausting graphic tv and skateboards; the notorious New Man who builds arty chairs, enjoys his Bud and ignores his girlfriend; and the PFW Volkswagen Golf girl who dumps her man, tosses her hair, and keeps the car keys, all with considerable élan.

A different, over-30s female persona, is catered for with the recent launch of the magazine *New Woman*, the British edition of the successful American title. Adopting a low-key, laid-back approach, editor Frankie McGowan hopes that the publication will have a more realistic articulation of female experience. This is a mag for women, who don't mind being less than perfect, disillusioned with the Shirley Conran Superwoman syndrome. With the emphasis on marriage and childrearing relationships, its image could become just another cosy branch of the women's market. At least *New Woman* acknowledges feminism as a starting point; though its message, less crudely defined and immediate than the PFW, could get lost amid the hype.

A superficial media construction, the PFW is nothing new, and little to do with feminism. Joan Crawford and Bette Davis performed those roles successfully in the 40s and 50s, while *Cosmopolitan* effectively colonised the career girl area with its job-of-erotica approach throughout the 70s. The only

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Illustration: Christine Roche

attitude that's new as we approach 1990 is the need for the media and advertising to appropriate two decades of feminist organisation for their own consumer uses.

PFW is the age-old philosphy of individualism, with a cursory nod in the direction of groundbreaking 70s gains like equal pay and opportunities. It's mutton dressed as lamb; a reactive concept, like post-modern or post-punk, that defines itself by *what it's not*. The term 'post' is inadequate to describe any movement, and in pursuing this hazy notion, the token elite PFW will become quite strident and defensive.

'It isn't about the right to a free NHS speculum... but to have as much fun, love and money as men', crows Julie Burchill. 'I think that a woman needn't be tough or masculine to succeed in business', says Jaqumine Bromage, managing director of St Laurente Rive Gauche. 'Nothing looks worse than a woman trying to be like a man.' All this of course, after the backbreaking hardship of inheriting Rive Gauche from mother.

In the same way that the new Right have adopted marxist terminology like 'radical' or 'revolutionary' as part of their language, a bland advertising media is trying to co-opt the force and dynamics of feminism. PFW is a convenient clause for feminists who were once politically active to feel comfortable about their departure; with the concentration on skirts and flirts, it also lets men off the hook, and the challenge presented by isolated female competition becomes a trend easily digested by enterprise capitalism.

The PFW has little respect for those who did the groundwork. Her fuck-off feminism is a blunt, imprecise stance and a neat distraction. Without Emmeline Pankhurst, Margaret Thatcher would still be stacking cans in Grantham; without the striking trade union women at Grunwick, Jaqumine Bromage and like-minded high fliers wouldn't be so assured of equal pay. In the light of Clause 28 and the Alton bill manoeuvres, its's clear that rights are never guaranteed, and with the new inequality in the labour force we might, horror of horrors, have to fight for them again. ●

Phantom Child

The film *Track 29*, the Nick Roeg/Dennis Potter collaboration, has just been released. W Stephen Gilbert assesses the work of Potter one of our most versatile and intriguing writers

The opening of the movie *Track 29* is not only notable because of its director Nicolas Roeg. It is also an event because, so rare for a movie, its writer is also an artist of considerable interest. In *Track 29*, Dennis Potter has reworked a notion from one of his television plays, *Schmoedipus* (1974). And Potter's most fertile soil has always been – perhaps always will be – the heavily cultivated earth of television.

Dennis Potter belongs to a generation of writers who aspired to the kudos of the theatre and the cash rewards of cinema but who wrote for television because it was in practical ways and also in a psychological sense 'simpler'. Many of those writers have done by far the largest portion of – and certainly the best of – their work for television.

Uniquely, Potter has cleaved to the medium with a passion. In 1970, he told *Radio Times:* 'Television is the only medium that really counts for me. It's the one that all people watch in all sorts of situations. Television is the biggest platform and you should kick and fight and bite your way into it. It's true that television is endemically a trivialising medium, but it doesn't follow that it *has* to be. Television is the true national theatre'.

Potter has reworked television projects for movies before, such as *Brimstone And Treacle* and *Pennies From Heaven* and also translated television material to the theatre, (*Son Of Man*, the Nigel Barton plays). But his original work outside television is confined to his three novels, the movie *Dreamchild* (1985) and the stage play *Sufficient Carbohydrate* (1983), which went the reverse route to television as *Visitors*.

It is the serendipitous juxtapositions of the drama and the rest of television's flow, the resonance of the interventions that the playwright can achieve that has always appealed to Potter. In a television increasingly created by accountants, merchandising consultants, coproducers' advertising analysts and ideological orthodoxy surveillance operatives, Potter argues angrily and irrefutably for the individual imagination.

Track 29 develops a number of his preoccupations. The

Dennis Potter: Clue master

child-man played by Gary Oldman (Tim Curry in the television version) is a figure Potter often conjures. A whole play, *Blue Remembered Hills* (1979), cast adults as children to recreate and embellish a childhood in the Forest of Dean, a location much returned to. In *Stand*

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Love off the rails; Gary Oldman and Theresa Russell in *Track 29*

Up Nigel Barton, one of his earliest plays (1965), the horrors of school were recreated with the grown-up children set down in class – a dream situation many have experienced. Those schooldays were again explored in the six-part *Singing Detective* (1986) with the same actress, Janet Henfrey, as the terrifying teacher.

Oldman's character in *Track 29* is the phantom child of a couple, the repression of whose sexuality is bound up with games and toys. Whether Gary Oldman's character literally 'exists', in so far as a fictional character can exist, is the least interesting question about him, this phantom nature is taken for granted in a number of Potter's works.

The new movie's title comes from the lyric of the song *Chattanooga Choo Choo*. Popular songs, particularly those of his wartime childhood, resonate all through Potter's writing, providing many of the titles of his works and symbolising the trivialisation of deep emotion that excites many of his characters.

The strand of commercial lyric writing that most exercises Potter is the characterisation of fulfilled emotion as a blessing, almost a religious experience. The relationship between the ecstasy of religion and the orgasm of sex is close to the heart of his concerns.

Two plays, *Angels Are So Few* (1970) and *Only Make Believe* (1973) posited the visit of an angel (or a man claiming to be an angel) to another sexually repressed suburban house. The second of the plays framed scenes from the first in a speculation about a self-disfigured man trying to write the earlier play, a relationship between fantasy and creativity that Potter gave full rein to in *The Singing Detective*. The famously banned *Brimstone And Treacle* (1976) had the devil visiting a similar household.

This thwarted sexuality is the most persistent and disturbing aspect of Potter's writing. Sometimes he dwells on the man who thinks he only needs a simple fuck for the world to be bright and shining – *Moonlight On The Highway* (1969), *Double Dare* (1976), the six-part *Pennies From Heaven* (1978). Perhaps the most searingly painful, most rawly exposed writing on the agony of unrealised desire occurs in his free-associating novel *Ticket To Ride* (1986).

The writing on sex pays little attention to the orthodoxies of sexual politics. Indeed, Potter's politics on every front are notably individualistic. He is by his own declaration no marxist. My greatest regret about the arc of his career is that his early interest in specific public issues has retreated. His public plays – *Vote Vote Vote For Nigel Barton* (1965) which drew on his own experiences as a Labour candidate in 1964; *Message For Posterity* (1967) based on Sutherland's commission to paint Churchill; *Traitor* (1971) about Kim Philby – find no equivalent now.

Recurrent illness has kept Potter out of a more public role and his writing that draws on the suffering of the sick not surprisingly finds him at his most trenchant – *Joe's Ark* (1974), *The Singing Detective*.

But, like his late contemporary David Mercer, Potter's distaste for the notion of being a pigeon-holed public figure is manifest and occurs frequently in his work, naturally in that great compendium of his themes *The Singing Detective* but most successfully in perhaps his best play, *Follow The Yellow Brick Road* (1972). Whether it infuriates him or not, we shall go on celebrating his work and gutting it for clues. ●

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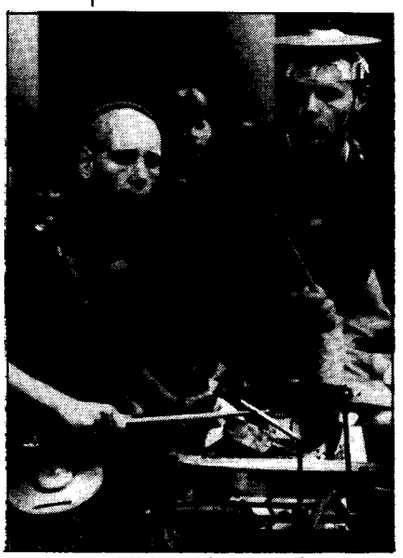
A Fraying Fringe

Is the Edinburgh Fringe becoming more commercial? Mark Lawson argues that all is not well at the heart of the Festival

It is the presence of three separate productions of Willy Russell's *Educating Rita* on the Fringe of this year's Edinburgh Festival which ought perhaps to alert us to something rotten in the state of Scotland's annual cultural festival.

It is not really a question of whether you believe that Russell's play 'questions the nature of education' (On



Off-beat fringe benefits

Edge Theatre Company) or is 'outrageous. Nationally acclaimed' (Northern Production Company) or even an 'award-winning comedy of educational values' (The Park Bench Theatre Company).

It is a question of whether you see any point in the Fringe, which is supposedly alternative, offering three opportunities to see a play, a middlebrow if expert comedy, which has already been shown in almost every town in Britain at both professional and amateur level. It is also a question of whether, when you get to that point, the Edinburgh Festival might not be losing lustre fast.

The first, and most often cited reason, is size. The Festival is, in different areas, a victim both of the constriction of artistic finance and the elephantiasis of success. The constriction hits the main Festival, the subject of funding uncertainties in recent years. Currently under the artistic direction of Frank Dunlop, it offers some genuinely intriguing world theatre but there is something almost as alarming as the three *Ritas* in the fact that the *Nieuw Ensemble Raam Teatre* of Antwerp is bringing to Edinburgh a production of Claire Luckham's *Trafford Tanzi*, once a Fringe hit.

There is also, in the presence of such productions as a Japanese *Tempest* (a follow-up to a successful Japanese *Macbeth*), an open incitement to the coffee-table theatre-goers, by no means a rare species in Edinburgh, to buy up the tickets for the usually short runs.

As the main Festival has become smaller, safer and less accessible to the impulse visitor, the Fringe has become bigger and longer. The statistics for this year are that the Festival runs from August 12 to September 3 and features 473 companies in 913 shows. Although some newspapers attempt to guide the visitor through this indiscriminate mess, word of mouth, the pot-luck principle or the Fringe First awards scheme invariably apply.

It is easy to see the arguments against advance vetting of productions or some minimum reputation qualification – administrative cost, removal of the all-comers aspect which is a founding principle of the Fringe. But a situation has now arisen in which a quantity of spectators, which has grossly swollen over the years (another penalty of success), is chasing the few hot tickets. That condition is the standard one for opera or West End musical theatre and its application to the Fringe is another symptom of the way in which an anti-institution has become institutionalised.

Another cause of the decline is the artistic and financial straight-jacketing of students. Ever since *Rosencrantz And Guildenstern Are Dead* was produced on the Fringe by Oxford students or, later, *Cock Ups* by Simon Moss or plays by Richard Crane and Stephen Jeffreys put on by newer universities, the collegiate input has been vital to the temperature of ambition in Edinburgh.

The fact that many college drama societies now resort to a well-known Beckett or, God help us, an *Amadeus* or an *Educating Rita* could easily be taken as further evidence of the safe, save-it, sheath-it generation of students so enthusiatically chronicled by the *Daily Mail* and *Sunday Telegraph*. But none of us wants to believe, for our own sanity, that they are sitting in those battered dramasoc offices, stained with tears, coffee and other substances, saying: 'They did *Educating Rita* at the local rep. It was terribly good.'

There must be another reason and it is, I think, money. Student drama is, from my memory of it, as prone to funding cuts as any other subsidised arts organisations.

As grants to the universities have declined, student union and college grants to drama have declined and college drama too becomes a slave of the great god 'getting it back at the box office'. It is, I suppose, another tribute to how successful the present government has been in educating the undergraduate Ritas in financial practicality but the Fringe is the loser.

The talk in recent years of an off-fringe – on the model of America's off-Broadway – is evidence of the sense of desiccation which has set in but, with the compression on the main Festival, an Edinburgh which amounted to a bald patch with two fringes of varying thicknesses would be a pretty funny cultural haircut.●

Radical Rays: In the dead of night a perfect swastika appears on the South African embassy. It's as though the repressed unconsciouss of the building has seeped through the bricks. Tired of all that effort to appear reasonable and liberal, the embassy becomes a little more candid for a moment. The swastika has disappeared by the morning.

It was, in fact, the subversive work of Polish artist Krzysztof

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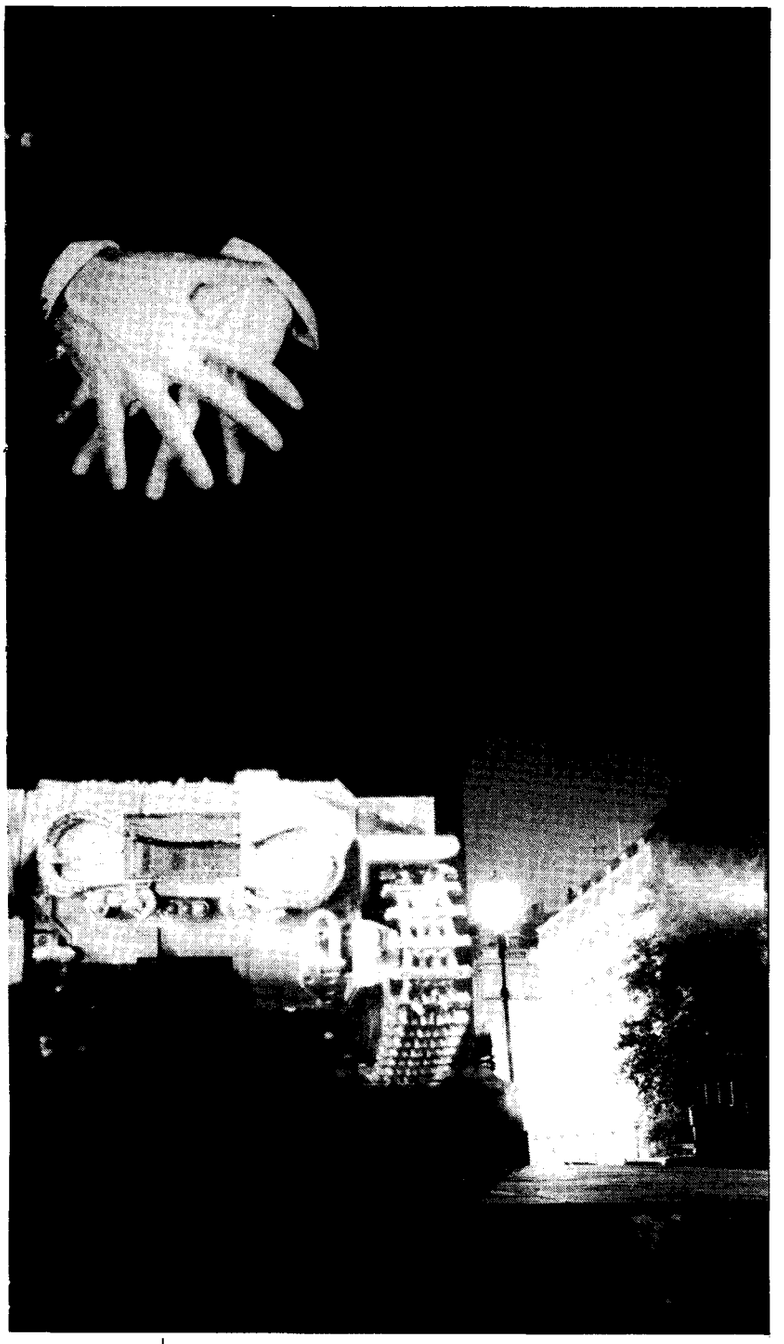

Wodiczko and his powerful Xenon-arc slide projectors. Since 1980 he has been projecting images on to buildings whose grandiose architecture speaks the language of power. An eye projected on to the Swiss National Bank scrutinises the vaults of gold below. A huge hand representing the American oath of allegiance turns up on the AT&T building in downtown Manhattan. But is the allegiance to the democratic ideals of the USA or to its anti-democratic multinational interests?

Wodiczko's last visit to Britain was in August 1985, when he projected these images of hands and a tank on to the Duke of York Column in London. This year the Edinburgh Festival is the setting for this new-style graffiti. Which he has taken in the more theatrical direction of a transient gesture. ●

Pete Culshaw

Dial A Hang-Up

As British Telecom cashes in on our booming call-me culture, John Lyttle and Rose Collis are hanging on the telephone

The humble telephone's split between mere method of communication and instrument of pleasure parallels (of course) the triumph of Thatcher-inspired consumerism. Indeed, the Tories' privatisation of British Telecom and the subsequent relaxation of regulations in the pursuit of profit and the even greater illusory grail of 'choice' can be seen to have generated today's glut of tabloid-flaunted teenage chatlines, automatic horoscopes, neo-porn, taped 'problem pages' and endless intimate conversations with Samantha, Linda, Mitzi and Maria.

While the entrepreneur conducts global business via satellite, through fax machines and cordless cellular carphones, the disenfranchised, eager to only connect, are exploited through the standard medium of suspect diversion. Now you see it, now you don't has been the eternal trap laid for the masses who cannot afford the real thing; the real thing in this case being 'life' as defined by the glossy reactivated success ethic. Hence call-me culture's roots in traditional working class iconography. For example, the peculiar notion that women with large breasts are inherently more gratifying is a weirdness shared by *Carry On* films, gutter journalism, most sitcoms and smutty seaside postcards.

The chatlines, with their punning, vaguely sexual titles, 'Speakeasy' etc, are ripe with forbidden promise. Distraction now, pay later; experience on the HP.

One (expensive) call – 38p per minute peak time – establishes the services' essential and, given British national character, necessary mildness. Busty Brenda's Saucy Secret is – gasp – that she, like Mrs Thatcher, is not a natural blonde. Similarly, looped advice on personal trauma – 'does the state of George and Sally's marriage relate to you?' – invites the caller to match his or her psyche to the problem of the day (compartmentalised analysis at last!) and is safely confined to turgid aural voyeurism.

The whole transplantation of perennial working-class obsessions (horoscopes, sleazy jokes, loose women) is unimaginative but immensely lucrative. Generally, it takes advantage of a divided nation, specifically it plunders a sense of shattered community. Hence the widely publicised isolated urban victims of the unmonitored teenlines, running up gigantic bills because they either can't afford to socialise in the old fashioned way, or are too frightened to.

In a cynical sense the latest developments in telephone services fulfils the Tory dream of profit as the great common denominator. Courting the uncatered for minorities, this all-enveloping spirit of free enterprise and pleasure for all now extends to lesbians and gay men. It's acceptable to ring if you're glad to be gay but only if there's an untapped market for politically disenfranchised business as well as BT. The moral double standards of the open market tolerate what you do over the telephone for money but censor what you might do in bed for free.

What these services encapsulate are today's contradictions. Mass communication reduced to nonsensical feedback; contact without context; sensation at a remove. The telephone, a paid companion, has usurped the function of the friend. It is jester, siren, fortune teller, custodian – the company of strangers available at the push of a button. In the end there is little to choose between the Samaritans, 999 and impersonal services. ●

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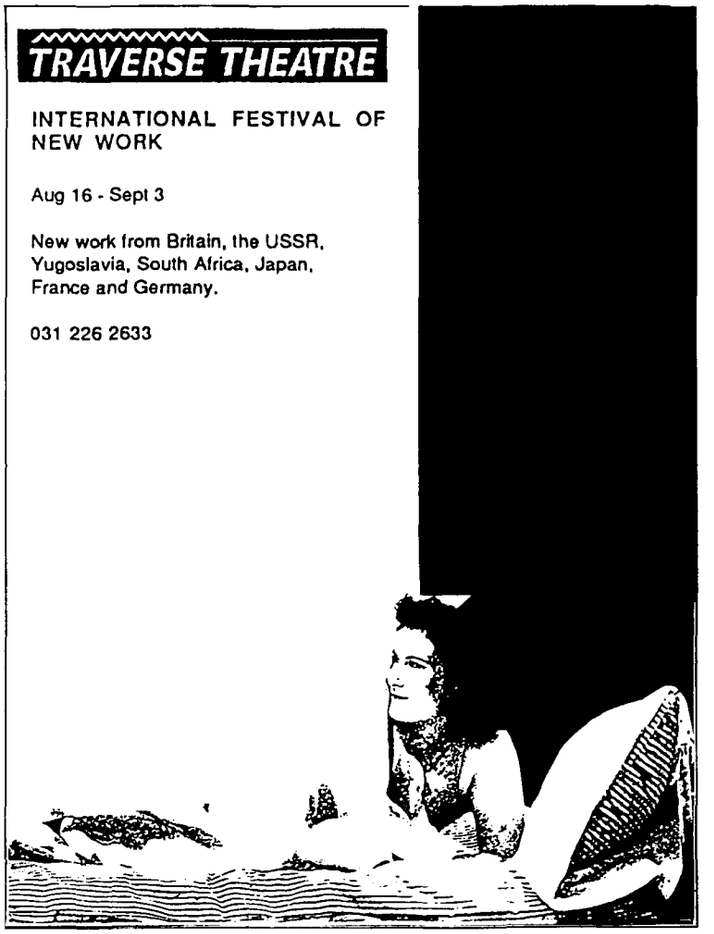

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Going Overground

The world of the Soviet 'underground' has been transformed by the Gorbachev revolution. Dissent, criticism and pluralism have moved to centre-stage. A new generation of intellectuals has been a vital part of this historic development. Julian Cooper reviews *The Thinking Reed: Intellectuals And The Soviet State, 1917 To The Present* by a leading figure of the new generation, Boris Kagarlitsky

One of the striking features of Soviet life under Gorbachev has been the mushrooming of so-called informal groups. Many are concerned with sport, pop music and the arts, but some have social and political concerns. To the Right there is the ugly *pamyat* (memory), an activist 'heritage' movement inspired by passionate Russian nationalism and anti-semitism; to the Left a disparate group of political, cultural and ecological clubs committed to supporting *perestroika*. In August 1987, these clubs came together to form the Federation of Socialist Clubs; a leading figure in this move was a young sociologist Boris Kagarlitsky.

The son of a well-known specialist in English literature, Kagarlitsky was active in the underground Left movement in the 'years of stagnation' and in 1982, a few months before Brezhnev's death, was imprisoned for publishing an unofficial journal, *The Left Turn*. A year later, under Andropov, he was released. The manuscript of **The Thinking Reed** *(Verso, £17.95 hbk)* was completed in 1982 and circulated in *samizdat;* now, six years later, it has been published for the first time. Since the book was written, the Soviet Union has been in the throes of a dramatic process of change, given a further boost by the recent party conference. How does the book contribute to our understanding of these momentous events?

While acknowledging the difficult circumstances of its birth, it has to be said that Kagarlitsky's book is disappointing. Rather than the integrated historical study suggested by the subtitle it represents a somewhat uneven set of essays discussing aspects of the development of the Russian intelligentsia from the beginning of the 19th century. In character, not surprisingly, it is a work strongly marked by the time and conditions of its creation.

Moscow in the last years of Brezhnev: a society that had lost its way, ruled with diminishing competence by a complacent gerontocracy. In intellectual circles cynical disaffection gained sway: many lost faith in socialism; some found comfort in nationalist nostalgia or religion. The dissident movement was demoralised and rent by bitter internal dispute. But by no means all lost hope of change. In the ranks of the 'above ground' intelligentsia there were still those who did their best within the limits of the system to push for change, keeping alive the possibility of renewal.

Some of the brightest young intellectuals, like Kagarlitsky, found inspiration in new ideas from the West – the student movement, the New Left and, later, Eurocommunism. Some became specialists in 'bourgeois ideology', publishing critical, but informative, articles in the official journals; others deployed their expertise in the underground world of *samizdat*. Whichever outlet was chosen (and some managed both), there was a tendency to write off most of the domestic Soviet scholarship and culture of the day.

As a product of these times, Kagarlitsky's book can be seen as part of the dialogue within dissenting circles. It seeks to analyse the changing position of the intelligentsia, defined as those writers, artists and scholars who are the bearers of critical ideas, showing the tradition of progressive thought and establishing the fact that while at certain key turning points (after 1905, 1917 and 1968) certain sections have turned to the Right. The tradition is such that, writing in the dark days, hope can still be found for a progressive, socialist renewal of Soviet society.

Noteworthy features of the book include Kagarlitsky's understanding of the nature of the Soviet regime, and his treatment of the intelligentsia under Brezhnev. Central to his analysis is the concept of 'statocracy'. The Soviet Union is seen not as a socialist country, but as a 'statocratic' society, dominated since the 1930s by a bureaucratic 'collective exploiter', the statocracy, representing a formidable fusion of economic and political power. For the establishment of democratic, self-governing socialism, it is argued, this statocratic dominance must be overcome. In this lies the difficulty of the task facing the democratic Left.

The failure of the 1965 economic reform and the 1968 intervention in Prague are seen as crucial events leading to a major crisis of reform ideology. This crisis provoked a growth of dissent and the appearance of right-wing currents within the intelligentsia. Here the reader is thrown into the whirlpool of Soviet dissident politics of the Brezhnev years. In a footnote Kagarlitsky makes reference to his previous hostility to Roy Medvedev, ruefully noting it as a manifestation of 'our purely Russian intolerance'. But some of this intolerance remains, as shown by his vituperative polemic against Bukovsky, Solzhenitsyn and Zinoviev.

One of the most interesting sections is devoted to some trends in what the author terms 'legal marxism', ie, the works of 'within system' intellectuals, but this discussion deals almost exclusively with publications of the late 1960s. It is striking that the only figure discussed by Kagarlitsky now prominent in the Gorbachev *perestroika* is Fedor Burlatsky. There is no mention of Frolov, Aganbegyan, Zaslavskaya, Shakhnazarov and the many other figures writing during the Brezhnev years who have provided the real intellectual impulse for the Gorbachev reforms – presumably because they lacked the radicalism necessary for them to be counted by Kagarlitsky as true members of the critical intelligentsia.

But these criticisms and the disappointment expressed above do not do justice to Kagarlitsky: his book has been overtaken by events and for this he can hardly be blamed! Reading the book confirms just how much has changed during the six years since its completion. Many of the negative features of Soviet intellectual and cultural life discussed by Kagarlitsky have already changed or are in the process of transformation. One very useful service of **The Thinking Reed** is its timely reminder of just how complex is the reality of Soviet society.

In his conclusion Kagarlitsky stresses that successful democratic renewal will depend ultimately not just on the intelligentsia but on the Soviet working class and its preparedness to struggle for change. In the wake of the party conference it is precisely this dimension of the *perestroika* that is likely to be of crucial importance. ●

Changing times in the USSR

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Love Sick

Love In The Time Of Cholera
Gabriel Garcia Marquez
Jonathan Cape £11.95 hbk

So overwhelming is the sense of sheer good humour in Garcia Marquez's writing that it seems churlish to feel disappointment with one of his works. But so it is with **Love In The Time Of Cholera,** a witty, charming book, full of moments of memorable insight, which carries you along cheerfully for most of its length then seems to abandon you somewhere, shrug its shoulders and wander off.

The novel is set on the Caribbean coast of a crumbling South American republic, a place that has greatly declined since its brief days of colonial and mercantile glory. Now the city seems to have sunk into reverie, its ruling class dreaming of past glories while ignoring the perpetual civil wars, epidemics and physical decay, which are eating away the material world around them.

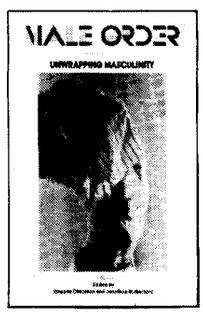
Romantic love dominates the novel, a love experienced with such intensity that its symptoms resemble those of cholera. The central romance is the passion of Florentino Ariza for Fermina Daza, a love that lasts, unrequited, for over 50 years. Fermina Daza spends most of that time as the exemplary wife of Dr Juvenal Urbino, whose physician father died fighting a cholera epidemic. Urbino dedicates his professional career to eliminating epidemic diseases through improving the city's public health, as well as ministering to the ailments of the better-off.

Florentino Ariza first awakens Fermina Daza's interest in romance, only to be rejected by her after a few years of hectic but unconsummated courtship. Florentino Ariza spends the rest of his life hunting women but living for glimpses of Fermina Daza and for the moment when he can renew the courtship which her marriage to Dr Juvenal Urbino interrupted.

His opportunity comes when they are both in their 70s and the good doctor suffers a fatal fall while trying to catch his celebrated parrot. Florentino Ariza renews his suit with an energy sharpened by the knowledge that now he is in a race with death. He eventually prevails. They take a trip on the river, where they spend an idyllic few days discovering love under the cover of the plague flag, flown to keep other passengers and snoopers at bay. Neither can face a return to the constraints of the city and we leave them facing the prospect of an eternal shipboard romance under the yellow cholera flag.

The book is dedicated to Garcia Marquez's wife, Mercedes, and the novel sometimes seems like a long and elaborate tribute to her and to all those sane, tolerant and wise Latin American women who take care of their selfish, weak and foolish men. Beyond that, it is an unashamed celebration of romanticism, a festival of love letters, gifts of roses and camelias, agonised sufferings and, even, violin serenades. The disappointment arises, perhaps, from a suspicion that, in the midst of his celebration, the author remains faintly unconvinced. ●

Isabel Hilton



Bitter Pills

Male Order – Unwrapping Masculinity
Eds: Rowena Chapman and Jonathan Rutherford
Lawrence and Wishart
£7.95 pbk

These essays are from the 1987 'Men Breaking Out' conference – one of the most inspired, though much belated, of *Marxism Today*'s interventions in popular politics. They establish some of the main themes of a sexual politics for the 1990s around the great unasked question of masculinity. The relationship of this question to the renewal of socialist politics and culture is clearly laid out in Jonathan Rutherford and Rowena Chapman's introduction, appositely entitled 'The Forward March of Men Halted' (including their critique of how *Marxism Today*, despite its feminist commitments, 'retains something of a masculine sensibility of its own'). Nevertheless, I can think of a hundred reasons why even the reconstructed and realigned readers of *Marxism Today* will find this a difficult and bitter pill to swallow.

All I can do in the space is to assure them that the effort is worth making – and that there is life after the old masculinity. *Marxism Today* readers have already sampled Cynthia Cockburn's powerful statement on 'Masculinity, The Left And Feminism'. Jonathan Rutherford's 'Who's That Man', is a stylish and perceptive exploration of the territories of contemporary masculinity and its many disavowals. I particularly liked his inventory of its sources in popular culture: the 'lonely inhospitable desert, the soaring emotional music and the man alone' of *Lawrence Of Arabia* or Bruce Springsteen's 'masculine nostalgia'. Lynne Segal's novel re-reading of the 1950s is full of disconcerting surprises: the persistent image of men oppressed by a 'stifling domesticity' in the literature of the Angry Young Men and – more disturbing – the unconscious heterosexuality ('what you must do, my son is become a fucker') in some of the prose of Colin MacInnes, who many of us at the time respected precisely for his open defence of his own homosexuality.

Kobena Mercer and Isaac Julien have put together a powerful dossier of documents virtually unknown to most of the Left, inspired by the courageous Gay Black Group. The dossier includes the angry statement on 'White Gay Racism' from *Gay News* with its critique of the lazy equivalence so often made on the Left between sexism and racism for its 'flattening out and reduction of the complex play of differences'; and their wonderfully original essay on black masculinity and the politics of representation from *Ten 8*. Both Rowena Chapman's 'The Great Pretender' and Frank Mort's 'Boys Own' put 'The New Man' into question.

Frank Mort's essay on the connections between shifting patterns of consumption, the valorisation of consumption itself and the construction of new gendered and sexual identities among young men, is another key contribution to his ongoing project; and his description of the relationship between socialism and the marketplace as a 'love affair with Dracula' is particularly convincing. However, very difficult themes are in fact being engaged here – ones which touch the whole question of the market and the Left, of politics and identity, and the troubled issue of so-called 'designer socialism' (which *Marxism Today* has been better at putting into practice than thematising and interrogating for its dubious readers).

This volume presents an agenda for the Left which it neglects at its peril. ●

Stuart Hall

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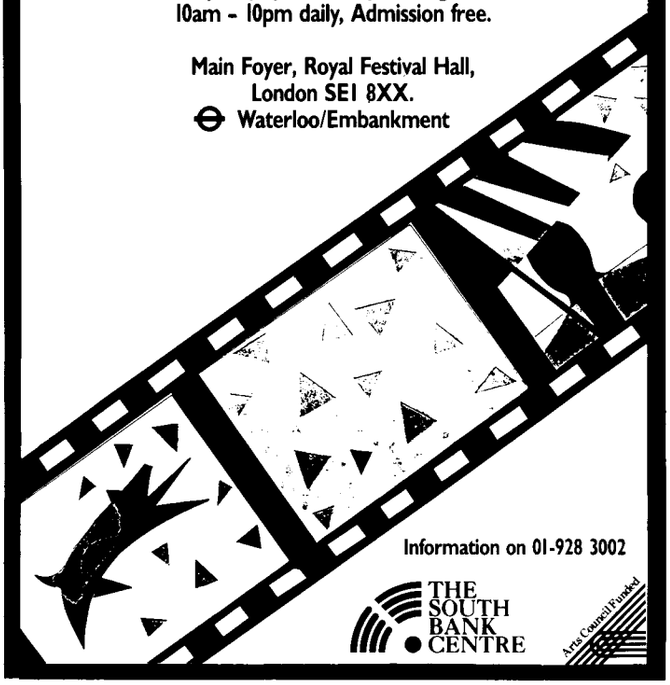

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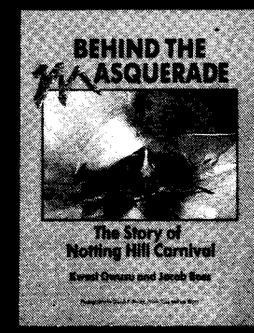

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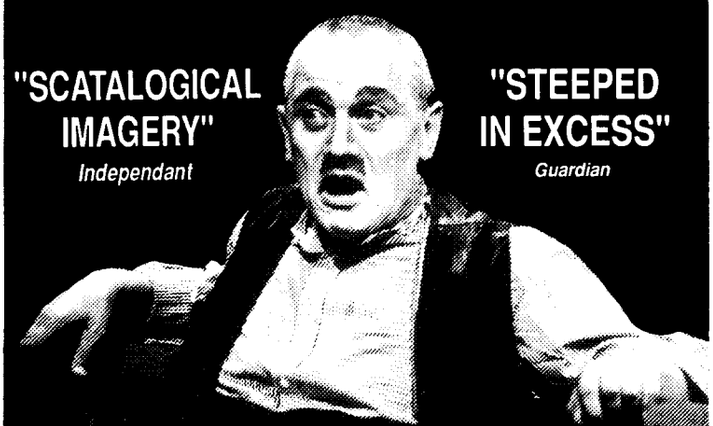

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Thatcher's Tax Losses

Scottish politics have acquired a quite new prominence since the last election and the Tory setbacks there. Jack Ashton continues our discussion of Scottish prospects.

Margaret Thatcher has been to Scotland on three recent occasions in a brazen attempt to tame the lion rampant as it continues to roar disapproval of her policies.

Her opening visit was to the Scottish Tory Party conference to try and put some backbone into her flagging troops still reeling from the humiliating rejection by the Scottish people at last year's general election – a rebuff underlined at the district elections earlier this year.

Next she came to Hampden Park for the Scottish cup final in another futile attempt to move the goalposts to suit her own political game.

Her crusade against the Scottish people took on a Christian fig leaf when she addressed the general assembly of the Church of Scotland – but not before some of the clergy had voiced opposition to her being afforded such a platform.

It could be argued that it is appropriate that Thatcher, the disciple of greed and privilege, addressed the general assembly as she has crucified the Scottish economy – a view belatedly shared by this august church body in its decision not to invite her back again. Surely a most damning indictment of this government's policies.

The Scottish election result proved disastrous for the Tories. In the 72 Scottish constituencies, prior to the June 1987 election, the Tories had 21 seats; they are now reduced to 10 seats with the other 62 being held by parties opposed to Thatcherite policies.

The outcome of the 1987 general election in Scotland was the opposite from in the United Kingdom where the Thatcherites were returned with a 105 majority. The Scottish result reflected widespread dissatisfaction with the policies of the Thatcher government; the imposition of the poll tax, the attacks on the local authorities and on every aspect of social services.

The decisive defeat of the Tories arose not only from disenchantment with Thatcher's policies, but also from the mass struggles waged by the Scottish people over the years on a number of issues crucial to Scotland as a nation. These had a big impact in the election campaign and were the main factor in securing the result. These campaigns in the main have all been spearheaded by the Scottish labour movement, and above all the STUC, where the Left and Communists have played a major role over the years in fighting for the concept of a broad united approach extending well beyond the labour movement.

A number of factors emerge as to why the Scottish result was so decisive, even compared with the north of England which suffered similar problems of economic decline.

Firstly, wide sections of the Scottish people are aware of the challenge facing them as a nation and recognise we stand at a cross-roads for our whole industrial future and close to the abyss of an 'irreversible decline.'

Secondly, Tory policy has helped condemn over 380,000 Scots to the dole queues and ruined the future for thousands of school leavers.

Thirdly, Tory policy has led to 250,000 manufacturing jobs lost over 10 years, and a third of our manufacturing sector closed down, with a rundown in manufacturing industry unequalled by any other advanced industrial nation, including the UK as a whole. Manufacturing is now providing just over 20% of Scotland's employment compared with over 30% in 1973; a job loss in manufacturing not matched by jobs created elsewhere.

The Scottish shipbuilding industry has virtually collapsed and further redundancies have taken place. There has been the demise of steel and hence the importance of the struggle to retain Ravenscraig which remains a key component of Scotland's industrial base. Coal, one of Scotland's greatest assets, has had massive job losses and is now at risk as an industry with the proposed import of foreign coal by the South of Scotland Electricity Board.

It has been the years of struggle on all the great social issues that provided the backcloth to the Tory Scottish electoral defeat last June.

There is a special basis for a strong and broad anti-Tory movement in Scotland owing to strong labour movement traditions, experiences of past struggles and a lasting sense of national identity.

This has meant that although the major struggles have been based in the traditionally unionised working class, there has also been a vital contribution from wider community backing.

This was seen in the UCS (1971), the threat to Ravenscraig (1983), the miners' strike (1984-5), Gartcosh (1986), Caterpillar and the current struggle against the poll tax.

To fully understand the current political scene in Scotland, it is essential to appreciate the exemplary role of the Scottish Trade Union Congress in its leadership in every aspect of struggle, not only involving trade union members, but the people as a whole, increasingly broadening its horizons and 'constituting itself the nation.'

The demand by all political parties (excluding the Tory Party) and all progressive organisations, including the church, for a Scottish assembly to meet Scotland's national rights, extend democracy and tackle Scotland's distinctive economic and social problem, has the full support of the Scottish Trade Union Congress.

It is the existence of the national question and a delayed solution that provides the reason for the existence of the SNP and its electoral ebb-and-flow.

The formation of an anti-poll tax broad steering committee under the auspices of the STUC embracing all political parties, broad organisations, including the churches, is a product of the widespread popular opposition to the tax.

The opportunist breakaway from the united steering committee by the SNP on the eve of the Scottish district elections was designed to gain electoral support, and undoubtedly, by posing as the forward force fighting the poll tax, brought them votes.

The poll tax is the central poll issue in Scottish politics today. The tax is widely recognised as a grave threat to the majority of Scottish people. Not only will it hit most of them financially but it also constitutes a serious danger to civil liberties and democracy.

The proposed poll tax, if successful, will be the greatest blow against local democracy and a further impediment to the advent of a Scottish assembly. Only if all opposed to the poll tax put their individual interests aside and work in unity on this issue, with community organisations, unions, churches and the institutions of the Scottish people, can we secure a victory.

The strategy of the STUC steering committee for a broad campaign of mass popular struggle holds the key to a defeat for Thatcherism. All the Scottish Labour MPs must be an integral part of that campaign to influence parliament and consolidate the labour movement's electoral base. Problems hitherto not experienced in working with different parties and organisations have arisen, problems of relations and of how to campaign for objectives. The ultra Left have been particularly destructive in the campaign.

Victory on this issue could have important repercussions in the counter-offensive against the government and open up the road to a Scottish assembly. ●

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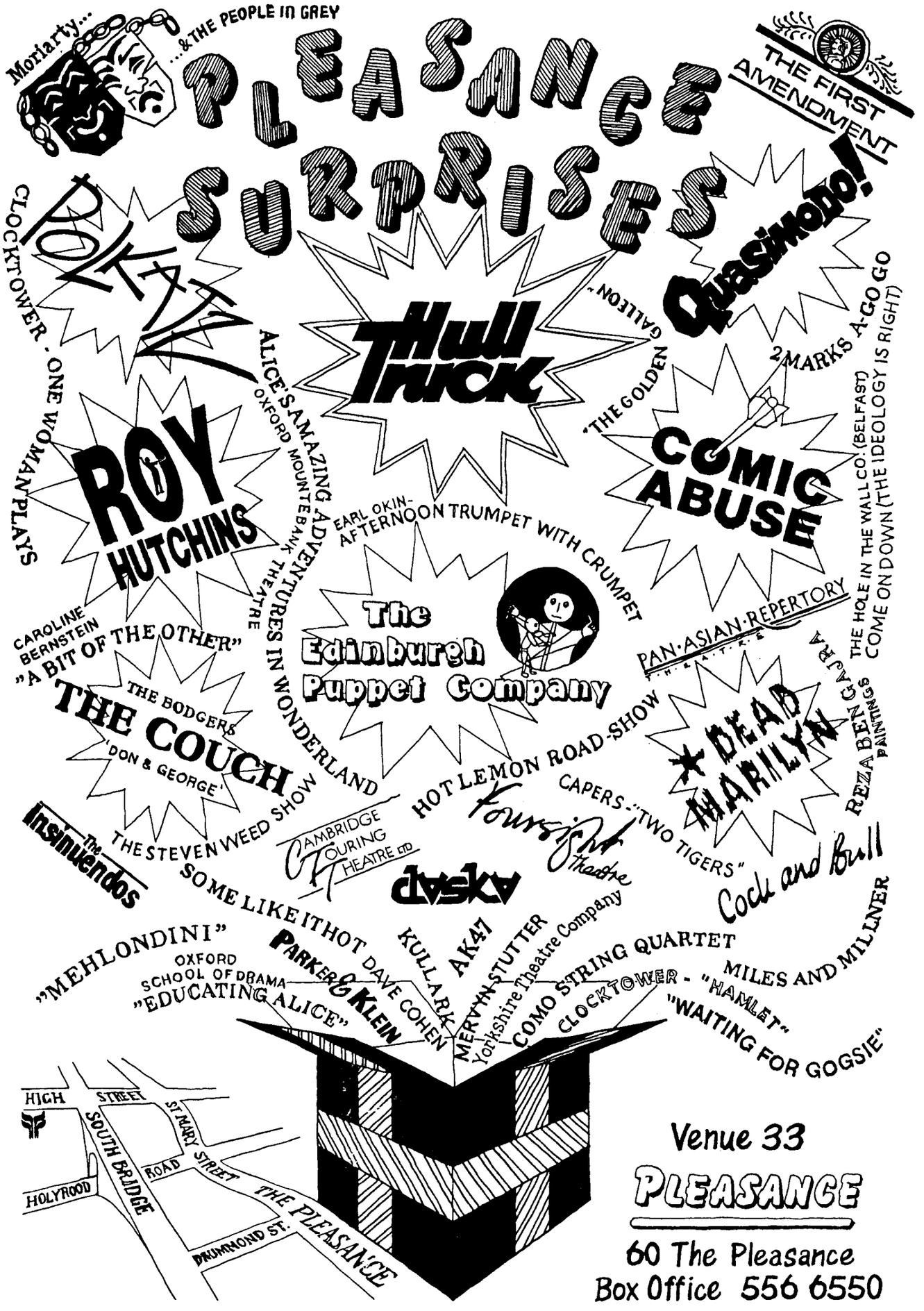

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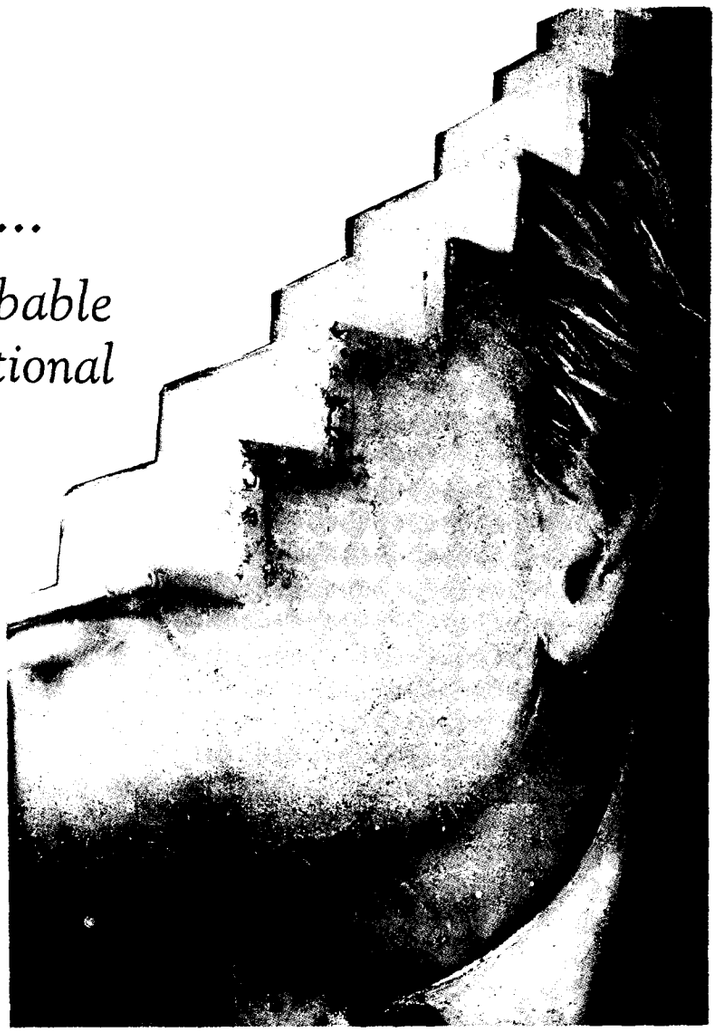

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M·T EVENTS

● **Haringey: Summer Garden Party & Barbecue. Sunday August 28, 7pm. At 20a Queens Avenue, Muswell Hill, London N10. Details (01) 348 8915. Organised by Haringey Marxism Today Group.**

● **Scotland: "What's Left in Scotland?" Marxism Today Scottish Weekend Event, Glasgow, November 4-6. For details, or if you are interested in helping. Willy Thompson, 5 University Avenue, Glasgow G12 8NN. Tel: (041) 339 5022.**

● **Manchester:** Marxism Today Discussion Group discusses David Marquand's article on the Centre (July MT) Tues Aug 2, Chorlton Library at 7.45. Details, (061) 861 985.

● **Manchester:** "Rolling back the Right". Marxism Today day event for Women. Speakers include Ros Brunt, Ruth Lister and Anne Pettifor. Saturday October 15, 10-5pm, Manchester Town Hall. Details, (061) 861 0985.

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● **Out of print** Irish Books. Catalogues issued. D. Candran, 44 Tylrey Rd, E7 0LR.

● **Out-of-print** books on Socialism and Labour history for sale. Please send SAE for lists to 36 Diamond St., Cardiff CF2 1NR.

● **The Clock Bookshop,** 138, High st. Lowestoft, Suffolk (0502) 500753. Books, vegetarian cafe, events and exhibitions – specialising in British history, politics, drama, poetry and childrens' books.

● **Municipal Monetarism** by Michael Ward. A Study of Nine Years of Tory Rule in Wandsworth. (GLLP 1987.) £3.00. From BLP Booksales, 177 Lavender Hill, London SW11. Tel: 01-274 5670.

● **Central Books:** Feature of the Month – "The USA." Many secondhand books especially on Labour Movement. Central Books, 37 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Nearest tube: Chancery Lane.

● **Left Politics** and history bought and sold. Send for lists. Peatling Books, Peatling Magna, Leicester LE8 3UN.

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● **Leo Baxendale** (creator of Minnie the Minx and Bash Street) on creativity, society and ideology, in THE ENCROACHMENT, Part I. An encroaching process of control; the ideologies of the one-eyed brothers of Capitalism and Patriarchy. £5.50 from Reaper Books, II Brockley Acres, Eastcombe, Stroud, Glos. GL6 7DU.

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MISCELLANEOUS

● **Wanted** for dissertation on Women in Sport, information from sportswomen past or present. Contact Pamela, 1, Mitcham Rd., Seven Kings, Ilford, Essex IG3 8QW. Tel. 590 0833.

● **Gay male Feminist** plans to start discussion group; would welcome any ideas for topics. Box 25.

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MESSAGES

● **Calling** Jim Jams to Swoo Pig – Happy 21st! Love and kisses XXX.

● **Suzanne,** Moore?

● **Love** and best wishes to Mary Browning, hope all goes well.

● **Jules** – Xmas was never quite the same without your Grandad! Drunk of Rickmansworth. XXX

● **To Hughie and Nettie** – wishing you a lovely stay in this country, much love from your niece.

● **Desperately** missing Creatively Canadian Cathy. XXX

● **Barbara Cartland** 1 Lenin 0. Lots of love to Natasha and Steve as the big day approaches. From all at MT. XXX

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Anne Diamond

Anne Diamond: Born to be mild

You heard of *The Call Of The Wild?* The Anne Diamond story, like that of so many others doing well in the broadcasting companies of the American-speaking world, could be subtitled *The Call Of The Mild.*

The Mild Bunch are feted not for what they have but what they have not; beauty, wit, originality, *talent.* Real talent carries with it a spark of something dark, something hinting at danger and destruction and derangement. Jim Morrison and Billie Holliday were easy marks for early death, but can you imagine Terry Wogan starving in a garret, or Jonathan Ross sunny side up at the bottom of his Filofax-shaped swimming pool? The Mild Bunch don't end up like that. They're the strained baby-food of communications, the glucose drip of entertainment.

The Mild Bunch is an international brotherhood; Ronald Reagan is its resident president, Clive James its wit, Jack Jones its crooner, Laurie Taylor its don, Desmond Morris its scientist, Felicity Kendal its sex symbol, Muffin the Mule its puppet. And Anne Diamond is its princess. Qualifications for joining this select bunch are few but rigidly-observed. You must be lower-middle to middle class by origin; you must be talent-free or burnt out; you must be smug; but above all you must have the hots for yourself. You must be the kind of person who looks in the mirror in such a way that if you did it too long, you would stand a very good chance of getting yourself pregnant.

The Mild Bunch may be found in many places, but always on air. *Start The Week, Stop The Week, Start The Life Support Machine, Quote Unquote, The News Quiz, Trivia Test Match.* But especially, especially, on early morning tv.

It wasn't always that way. Remember the original TV-am? Peter Jay's 'mission to explain'? Sort of the Fabian Society with cue-cards. The 'Famous Five', as Jay, Michael Parkinson, Robert Kee, Anna Ford and Angela Rippon were called, were the last gasp in tv of what Norman Tebbit likes to call, snarling, 'the Holland Park cocktail set' – la-di-da wets responsible for decimal money and the Perm Soc, led by Roy Jenkins, King Wet himself. They were university types; sometimes, like Kee and Ford, highly intelligent but always, like Parkinson and Rippon, highly professional.

They weren't popular. What might have been bearable at twilight was seen as patronising and pompous in the cold light of dawn. They suffered against the BBC's *Breakfast Time,* which caught a good balance with the beauty and amateurism of Selina Scott and the homely slickness of Frank Bough. *They* didn't have anything so grand as a mission to explain; they could barely keep their eyes open.

When the plug was pulled on TV-am after months of disastrous ratings, and before the red wine was dry on Jonathan Aitken's jacket, TV-am had gone one better than the BBC. Josephine Public wanted amateurism and homeliness, they'd give it to her. When the first American breakfast tv of the early 50s did badly, the sponsors came up with a foolproof way of attracting viewers; a chimpanzee called Alfred J Muggs, who on roller skates would zoom across the studio when Dean Rusk got too dull.

TV-am didn't go this far, but they did the next best thing. They got Wincey the weather girl, Russell the camp astrologer, Claire the agony aunt and a cast of faceless men to support their new princess of suburbia, Anne Diamond, a provincial tv reporter chosen for exactly that reason. A new Mild Bunch was born.

Born to be mild: Anne Diamond is about as mild as it gets. To say she has delusions of grandeur is to push it; what she has are delusions of adequacy. Seeing her, you feel like a stone-age man finding a cocktail umbrella; what exactly is she *for?* This is no campaigning Rantzen, no highbrow Bakewell, showy Scott or dream-girl Fabian Ford. The best that can be said for Diamond is that she is gamine for a laugh: an eight-year old boy in the body of a grown woman. Her career consists of sitting on a sofa, opening her eyes wide and saying 'Gosh'.

Even if you approve of free-market feminism, as I do – socialism never did anything for feminism but make a shambling bag-lady of it, weighing it down with useless ideology and promising you jam tomorrow so long as you stood by your man and didn't get pushy like that bitch Thatcher – Anne Diamond is a hard case to argue.

It is hard to feel sorry for her: her out-of-court settlement reportedly to the tune of £350,000, with the agent who took her from Birmingham to Camden and was sacked. Her boyfriend of nine years, Mike Hollingsworth, giving up his job as her former boss at TV-am and joining her entourage as business adviser (very post-feminist woman, that). It is hard to feel sorry for a woman who earns more than £170,000 a year for saying 'Gosh'. Her pregnancies, her separation from Hollingsworth, her unmarried condition; so meticulously has her shell been constructed that there's nothing there to feel sorry for.

Anne Diamond is the languid princess of a lazy nation, used to being British and doing nothing. Her American equivalent, Jane Pawley, is not only impossibly beautiful (and impeccably liberal, married to Gary Trudeau), but can tie grown men with addresses on Pennsylvania Avenue in knots before breakfast. Why can't we have that? Instead we have Anne Diamond; as insignificant, yet as irritating, as a piece of grit in the eye. ●

Julie Burchill

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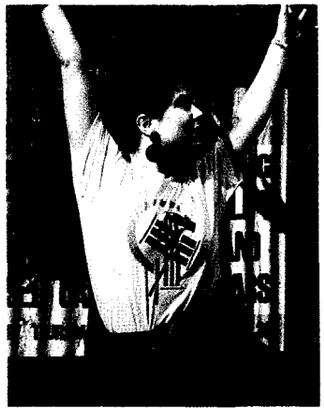

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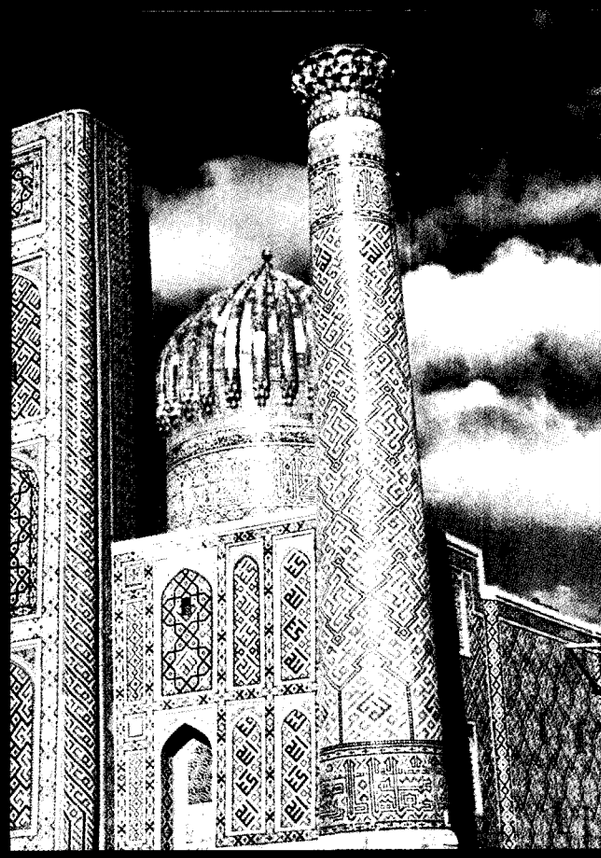

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